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E N Q U I R Y

C O N C E R N I N G

T H E P R O M I S E S O F T H E G O S P E L,

Whether any of them are made to the EXERCISES
and DOINGS of persons in an UNREGENERATE
STATE.

C O N T A I N I N G,

REMARKS on two sermons published by Dr. MAYHEW of Boston, en-
titled, *Striving to enter in at the strait gate explained and inculcated;*
and the Connection of Salvation therewith, proved from the Holy
Scripture.

A L S O,

A brief enquiry into the USE OF MEANS;

Shewing their necessity in order to Salvation; and what is the true
ground of encouragement for sinners diligently to attend on them.

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GREAT MEN are not *always* wise.

ELIHU.

B O S T O N, N. E.

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PREFACE.

T H E

P R E F A C E.

AS the sermons remark'd upon in the following sheets, were published in Boston in the year 1761, it may be a question, Why no reply has been made to them long before this time; seeing the doctor has therein attempted to establish a doctrine, so directly contrary to the sentiments and preaching of many divines in New-England? To this, the author of what follows has only to say, That the sermons had been long published before he got sight of them: After this, he waited, hoping and expecting, that some able hand would undertake an answer. But when he despaired of this, he turned his thoughts this way, and has employed his first leisure hours, in attending to the subject. The result of which, imperfect as it is, is now offered to the public. And none, it is hoped, will think it is ever too late to defend the truth.

BUT what need, may it be said, of entering into this controversy at all? If the author had a desire to publish his thoughts upon this subject, he had an undoubted right to do it: but what call was there to engage in a formal controversy with Dr. Mayhew? If the truth is vindicated by solid arguments, what has been said against it will fall of course. There was no occasion therefore of making a formal attack upon the doctor's performance: this must proceed from too great a forwardness to run into controversy, of which little good comes, and often much hurt.

Ans.

Ans. As this objection is against the common practice of christian writers, from the early days of christianity to this time, and the men most noted for wisdom and piety, yea, Dr. Mayhew himself among the rest, the author thinks himself sufficiently kept in countenance by their example.

Besides, does not this appear to be the most proper and effectual way, in many cases at least, to detect error, and vindicate the truth? If errors are broached, and contended for by plausible arguments, how can they be detected, and the truth set in an advantageous light, but by particularly showing the fallacy of the pretended argument? If error is openly plead for, it tends to hurt the public, and lead many astray. And what likelier method can there be taken to prevent the mischief, than by particularly shewing, how ill grounded and absurd the arguments are, with which it is supported, and pointing out the book in which they are found? If poison is publicly sold, and spread among the people, under pretence of its being a wholesome food, a true friend to mankind, would not content himself with pointing out the real qualities of good food; but would discover the poison of that which pretended to be such, and tell them where it was, that they might be under advantage to see for themselves, and avoid the danger.

Controversy, it must be acknowledged, is too often managed, in an unfair manner, and with unchristian heat and bitterness; and many times is diverted from fair reasoning on the point to be disputed, into personal quarrel and invectives. This can by no means be justified; but it may, and often has been managed, greatly to the advantage

tage of truth. It were easy to shew, that this has been one special and principal means, of the maintenance and increase of light and truth in the christian church. One great end of God, in suffering men of an uncommon genius to run into error, and spend their lives in hard study and labor, in order to maintain and propagate their tenets, and oppose the truth, it seems has been, to awaken the attention of men hereby, especially of the friends of truth; that, by a close and thorough examination of the matter, the error may appear in all its weakness and inconsistency, and the opposite truth be set in a more clear and convincing light, than it could be, had it never been opposed. To be sure, that this has in fact been the event of controversy and dispute, in many instances, none can doubt, who have been in any measure attentive to the state of the christian church. And the dispute that arises on such occasions, is the means of awakening the attention of multitudes; by which they are the more prepared to receive conviction of the truth, when it shines forth bright and victorious. When opponents are engaged in a doctrinal controversy, not only the love of truth, their zeal for God and his cause, but their own personal interest and honor, will be a powerful motive to study and search out the matter, and vindicate their cause in the best manner they can. And by-standers, who are properly attentive, and disposed to embrace the truth wherever it appears, will hereby be under special advantage to get instruction: for it would be a wonder, if some new light is not struck up by this means, even though the controversy should not be managed every way in the best manner.

What

What Dr. Mayhew says to this point, is worthy to be attended to here. Speaking of those who greatly dislike controversy and disputes on matters of religion, he says, “ A third sort, are those good
 “ men, who sincerely love and practice religion
 “ themselves, but yet are such great lovers of
 “ peace, of such a timid make, and so apprehen-
 “ sive of the bad effects of contention, that they
 “ think it best never to enter into debates on reli-
 “ gion, or any thing relative to it on any occasi-
 “ on; and condemn those who do so, as at best
 “ imprudent and ill advised persons. But surely
 “ there may be just and sufficient cause for disput-
 “ ing, if religion itself is of any great importance.
 “ We are enjoined to contend earnestly for the
 “ faith.”* It may be added, the more earnestly
 we contend, the better, if it be with christian
 meekness and humility. If those good, peaceable
 gentlemen, who are so greatly averse to, and dis-
 gusted with all controversy, were universally hear-
 kened to, most of the important doctrines of chris-
 tianity, would soon be given up, or lost in dark-
 ness and ignorance.

‘If any should be inclined to think, that the point here controverted, is not of importance enough, to require any great ado about it; and is a sufficient reason against entering into a public debate upon it: they are desired to consider, that the question in dispute really is, What is the condition, on which men may obtain salvation? or, What must men do, in order to be interested in God’s favor, and have a title to eternal life? This is

* *Observations, &c.* p. 5, 6.

therefore

therefore the most interesting question that can be thought of: and 'tis of the greatest importance to all, that they make no mistake here, but have a right understanding of the matter. For surely nothing in religion is of greater importance, than that which teaches us how we may be saved. If salvation itself is of infinite importance, then 'tis of equal importance that we don't mistake the terms on which it is to be obtained. What we chiefly want a revelation from God for, is, to teach us the terms of his favor, or the way of salvation. And since a revelation is given chiefly for this end, shall we think it a matter of so little importance, as that 'tis not worth while to enquire into it, or contend for what we think to be the truth of the matter?

Dr. Mayhew thinks what he contends for, to be the sum of the glad tidings of the gospel.* Consequently, in his view, they do not preach nor understand the gospel, who oppose him in this point. He therefore thinks it of great importance that it should be received.† 'Tis granted to be so, if it is the truth. If it is not, it is of the last importance to him, and all others, that they should be sensible of it, and embrace directly the contrary, as truth: which, doubtless appears as greatly important, to those who are now established in it. They therefore may be allowed to contend earnestly for it.

BUT however just and important this controversy may be, it is surely not well timed, some will say. Dr. Mayhew is now engaged in a good and important cause, in his controversy with the episc-

* P. 76.

† P. 80.

copal party in New-England. An appearance against him at this time, may give some advantage to his other opponents, and tend to weaken his hands. At least, this attack, at this time, looks unfriendly to the important and noble cause he has espoused.

Ans. That the cause the doctor is engaged in, is important and noble, the author readily acknowledges; and is not a little pleased, that a gentleman of his abilities and advantages has undertaken it. He certainly deserves the thanks of his country, for what he has done in this matter. And doubtless has the thanks of all the true friends to the interest of religion; not excepting even those of the church of England, who have impartiality and candor enough, to attend to the true state of the case. The author is willing the world should know, that he wishes and prays, that an end may be put to the erecting of episcopal missions in New-England, in the manner it has been done for so long a time; by which, he has not the least doubt, not the cause of christianity, but directly the opposite, has been greatly promoted. He sincerely wishes, the doctor may have the honor and happiness, of being an instrument of this; and would therefore be sorry to do any thing, that should tend to prevent it.

But if the doctor should appear to be wrong in one instance, this is no argument that he is so in all others. And an attempt to set him right, wherein he is thought to have made a mistake, is an act of friendship to him. It is also, perhaps, worthy of remark, that the tenet in which the doctor is opposed in the following enquiry, is exactly agreeable to most, if not all of the episcopal party in New-England; so that he herein falls in
with

with those he opposes in the controversy mentioned. The author, therefore, in opposing the doctor here, equally opposes those whom he appears against. How then does he strengthen them, and weaken the doctor's hands? May it not be truly said, that if the doctor should be convinced of his mistake in this instance, if it is one, and espouse the contrary doctrine, he would be under better advantages in this controversy, than now he is? It is well known, what a noise most of the doctor's antagonists have made about his heterodoxy. If he had been quite orthodox, according to the faith of our pious forefathers in New-England, they would not have had this handle, however sincerely they now use it.

The author thinks the doctor worthy of esteem and honor, for his many excellent talents; his close application and diligence in his study, his easy, happy, masterly way of expressing his sentiments, &c. but all this is, in his view, rather a reason why the doctor should be corrected, if he errs in any important point. For such an error in *him*, will of course be more hurtful and fatal to mankind, than in another. If his own conviction of his mistake would have been a sufficient remedy of this evil, application would have been made to him only; but as the case stands, a public confutation seems necessary.

THE doctor, without doubt, thought his arguments conclusive, and that he was doing service to God and his church, in vindicating, in the best manner he could, what appeared to him important truth. And he may perhaps think, what is here offered to him and the public, is weak and incon-
clusive.

clusive. If so, the author does not expect to be contemned or neglected; but that the doctor will be so just to himself, and good to the public, as fairly, and with christian meekness to vindicate his scheme, from the exceptions here taken, and shew that they are indeed without foundation. If he should be convinced that he has made a mistake, it is concluded, from his known disposition to be frank and open, that he will freely confess it. However that may be, the author, at present, rests in the goodness of his cause, and chearfully commits it to Him, who is able to plead it most effectually, in His own way and time.

THE *tenth* section is more than was at first designed: but finding that what was said on the subject, would naturally lead to the question there considered; and it being an important one, and one about which there is perhaps more enquiry and dispute now, than ever there has been before, tho' little or nothing has been published upon it; it was thought best not wholly to pass it in silence. The author is far from thinking the subject is exhausted, or that it may not be set in a far more clear and convincing light. If any serious readers, who have been in any degree of darkness and uncertainty with respect to this question, shall by what is there said get any light: and if these hints shall be a help and excitement to any, who are making this the subject of their enquiry, to pursue the matter, so as to throw greater light upon it, the utmost that is expected will be answered. If the author has made any dangerous mistake on this head, and it shall be pointed out by some wise, judicious pen, he will most gladly stand corrected before the world.

APRIL 8th, 1765.

SECTION I.

THE text on which the doctor grounds his discourse considered. His inconsistency with himself, in his way of explaining it, shewn.

THE words the doctor has chosen as the ground of his discourse now under consideration, are those of our Saviour, " Strive to enter in at the strait gate," (*a*) This text has been differently understood. Some suppose that by the *strait gate* is meant the entrance upon an holy life, or getting into the narrow way which leads to eternal life; which is the same that is commonly called conversion, or the new birth. And by striving to enter in at this gate, they understand the exercises and endeavours of the unregenerate, which are antecedent to their conversion. But, few or none who understand the text thus, suppose there is any certain connection between the striving here exhorted to, and saving conversion, or that there is any promise made to this striving.

Others suppose that by the strait gate our Saviour means, in general, the entrance into heaven or eternal life. (*b*) And then by striving to enter in at this gate, is meant, a keeping the command-

(*a*) Luke xiii. 24.

(*b*) See Dr. Dodd. & Poli Syn. on the text.
ments

ments of God, or the holy exercises of true saints, by which they walk in the way to heaven; fight the fight of faith, and so lay hold on eternal life. And in support of this last interpretation, and as an evidence that *striving* in the text, does not mean the unholy exercises and endeavours of those whose hearts are wholly under the dominion of sin; but the holy exercises and strivings of the godly, it may be observed, that the word in the original, translated *strive* when used in other places in the new testament, as it is often, always denotes the exercises and labor of true christians in their way to heaven. And no good reason perhaps can be given, why it should not be understood in the same sense here. When St. Paul says to Timothy, "Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life," he speaks to an eminently good man; and therefore it must be understood as an exhortation resolutely to persevere in a christian course. But the word in the original here translated *fight*, is the same used by the evangelist in the text under consideration. (c) The same words St. Paul uses concerning himself, to denote the christian course he had gone through. "I have fought the good fight." And he makes use of the same word, in his first epistle to the Corinthians, with reference to the exercises of true christians, by which they go in the way to heaven. "And every one that *striveth* for the mastery, is temperate in all things: Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible." And he denotes his own exercises as a servant of Christ

(c) *Agonizou ten kalen agona: Agonize the good agony.* 1. Tim. vi. 12. by

by the same word. "Whereunto I also labor, *striving* according to his working, which he worketh in me mightily."

It may be noted here, that the word in the original in all these places, was most commonly used by the Greeks to denote the exercises and labor of those, who were candidates for the prize set up in the Olympic games: for instance, the vigorous exertion of those who ran a race, in order to obtain the prize set up for him who should out-run. And as these games in which they ran for the prize, &c. were a fit emblem of the exercises of the christian life, it is frequently represented by them: and hence the word used for those exercises, is applied to the christian, to signify the exercises and labor by which he strives for eternal life. And the christian course is called a race or *agony*, in allusion to the same thing. (d) According to this, to strive to enter in at the strait gate of eternal life, or to agonize in order hereunto, is to agonize the good agony, so as to lay hold on eternal life; to run the christian race, the way of true holiness, which is set before us: And is the same which Christ exhorts to, when he says, "Enter ye in at the strait gate." (e) But let it be observed that the question now in dispute does not turn upon the interpretation of this text; for let it be understood in either of the senses above-mentioned, it makes nothing for the doctor's promises to the doings of the unregenerate. Only let it be remembered, that if by the strait gate is meant the gate of eternal life, as the doctor un-

(d) Heb xii. 1.—*Let us run the race. In the original the agony. The race itself is called the agony, the running is agonizing.* (e) Matt. vii. 14.

derstands it, striving to enter in, must intend, a walking in the narrow way of holiness; and then it stands directly against him. This leads me to consider the doctor's interpretation.

By the strait gate, the doctor understands the gate of heaven, or "the gate of eternal life and happiness." (f) But contrary to most, if not all others, who suppose this to be the meaning of the strait gate, and in direct contradiction to himself, as will be seen presently, he understands *striving* to enter in at this gate, to mean the endeavours and doings of the unregenerate, who are wholly without all true holiness. To these *unholy* exercises and doings of the unregenerate, he insists, the promises of regenerating grace and salvation are made; and by these, he supposes, however absurdly, they go in the way to heaven, and enter in thro' the gates into that holy city.

The doctor indeed supposes, that the words may be considered as a precept given "both to those who are, and who are not already in a regenerate state." (g) If so, then they are a command which enjoins both the unholy endeavours of the wicked, and the godly exercises of the true christian. The doctor's argument for this is in the following words. "For be they in that happy estate or not, still they ought to use their utmost diligence to obtain the salvation revealed in the gospel; or, which is the same thing, to enter in at the strait gate." It is true that all *ought* to enter in at the strait gate (taking the gate in the doctor's sense of it) and in order to this, they *ought* to be real chris-

(f) P. 6, 7.

(g) P. 6.

stians and to live an holy life. And in this view, the command to enter in at this gate is enjoined upon all, whether regenerate or not; as all are under indispenfible obligations to strive in this manner, in the exercife of true holinefs. If the precept to strive to enter in at the strait gate, enjoins on christians earnestly to seek eternal life in the way of true holinefs, or in keeping the commandments of God; then it enjoins the *same* on wicked men, and points out the *very same* way for them to obtain eternal life in, as for true saints, and not *another* and quite different one; as it must do, if it only requires of them those doings which have nothing of the nature of true holinefs, and are therefore different in nature and kind from what the true christian is directed to; they having no more likeness, relation and connection, than godliness and ungodliness. If, on the other hand, when wicked men are commanded to enter in at the strait gate of eternal life, no more is intended than what they may do, and yet be unholy in heart and life; then no more is intended by the same command to the regenerate; for doubtless the command requires the same thing of one as of another: and if so, they may enter into eternal life without any true holinefs; for the command to *enter in*, surely requires all that is necessary in order to enter in. But none, I trust, will assert that the unholy and unclean can, while such, enter in through the gates into the heavenly city.

The doctor repeatedly says, there is *but one* way of life and salvation; and challenges any one, who shall say there are two, or more, to point them out, and shew the difference there is betwixt them; and

and yet that both are true and right, the ways of God's revealing. (b) It seems the doctor himself is the man, who has found out *two* ways to life and salvation, viz. the way of the unholy and unclean, and the way of true virtue and holiness, in which they go who turn their feet unto God's testimonies. But what's most remarkable is, that he insists upon it, that these two different ways are pointed out and enjoined by one and the same command. And now we must wait on him to shew the difference, and tell what the command enjoins on one, which it does not on the other.

BUT if we attend to the doctor's description of striving to enter in at the strait gate; we shall find that it is not only inconsistent with its intending only the endeavours of the unregenerate (which it must, if the words were to his purpose) but is also not consistent with their being at all intended or included in this striving; it being, according to him, only applicable to the exercises and doings of real christians. When the doctor was giving this description, he seems to have in a measure forgot the point he chiefly contends for, and gives such an account of *striving*, &c. as is by no means compatible to the unregenerate; and so really inconsistent with what he was about to prove. The reader must judge of the justice of this remark, when he has attended to what follows.

To *strive* to enter in at the strait gate, is, according to the doctor, to go in the narrow way which leadeth to life; and is opposed to the broad way leading to destruction. For he says, " If we are

“travelling towards the wide gate of destruction.”(*i*) But this *narrow way* is undoubtedly the way of holiness, if any such way is spoken of in holy scripture; the way of God’s commands, in distinction from all the *crooked* ways of sinners; the way of the upright, who keep the commandments of God, and so enter in through the gates into life.

As all men are in scripture comprehended in two opposite characters, between which there is no medium, viz. the good and the evil, the righteous and the ungodly; the children of God, and the children of the devil, &c. so there are but two different and opposite ways spoken of in which they are going, viz. “the way of the righteous, and the way of the ungodly:”(*k*) The broad way which leadeth to destruction, and the narrow way which leadeth to life; or to the gate through which the righteous enter into life. This latter is often spoken of in scripture. It is called “the way everlasting.”(*l*) “The way of life.”(*m*) “The way of wisdom.”(*n*) The way of righteousness,” or holiness.(*o*) “The way of good men.”(*p*) “The path of the just.”(*q*) “The way of God’s saints.”(*r*) The way of the undefiled, who walk in the law of the Lord.(*s*) The way of God’s commandments.(*t*) The way of holiness, in which, not the unclean, but the redeemed only are found.(*u*) Now, can any one who attends to the scriptural account of this matter, think that the narrow way which Christ speaks of as leading

(*i*) P. 35. (*k*) *Psal.* i. 6. (*l*) *Psal.* cxxxix. 24. (*m*) *Prov.* xv. 24. (*n*) *Prov.* iv. 11. (*o*) *Prov.* viii. 2. (*p*) *Prov.* ii. 20. (*q*) *Prov.* iv. 18. (*r*) *Prov.* ii. 8. (*s*) *Psal.* cxix. 1. (*t*) *v.* 32. (*u*) *Isaiab.* xxxv. 8, 9.

to life, is not the way of true holiness ; but the way in which the unregenerate, the unholy and ungodly walk !

Again, he speaks of striving, &c. as “ the way of truth, righteousness and life.” (x) This surely is not the way of the ungodly, but of the *righteous*, or those who love and practice the truth.

Moreover, he says, “ Unless we strive, in general, in the manner *we ought to do*, allowing for involuntary mistakes, we are not in the way that leadeth unto life.” (y) The doctor himself will not deny, I trust, that all under the gospel *ought* to be true christians, and live a holy life, and in this manner to seek the salvation of their souls ; consequently if persons strive as they *ought to do*, they strive in this manner. Therefore any striving short of this, falls short of what is commanded ; so is not connected with, or the way to, eternal life. In this one sentence the doctor has shut all wicked or unregenerate men out of the way which leadeth to life ; and represented striving to enter in at the strait gate to be what they never attain to.

He also speaks of *striving*, as that by which persons *overcome* the world, the flesh and the devil, principalities and powers and spiritual wickednesses in high places. (z) But he who does this, is surely a true christian, a regenerate, holy person, if such an one is any where spoken of in the bible. The true followers of Christ, or real christians are very often characterized, and distinguished from all others, by this, that they *overcome*. And St.

(x) P. 7, 8. (y) P. 35. (z) P. 9.

John expressly says, that none overcome the world, but they who are born of God. (a) St. Paul speaks of it as the great work of the christian to stand his ground against principalities and powers, &c. and directs to put on *the whole armour of God* as necessary in order to this : which, none who read the description he gives of it, can think is ever complied with by the unregenerate. (b)

Further, the doctor says, “ *A dependance upon Christ, as mediator between God and man, is implied in the very notion of striving to obtain salvation thro’ him.*” And that it comprehends a “ *relying, not on any supposed merit in what we do, but on the mercy of God in Christ, for acceptance with him.*” (c) Now, this is the very thing by which God’s people, or true saints are in scripture distinguished from all others, as that in which true godliness consists: and by it is evidently meant that FAITH, saving, precious, holy faith of God’s elect, which is peculiar to good men, and by which the just do live. They who *hope in the mercy of God*, and trust in him are repeatedly spoken of as the blessed people of God to whom all divine promises are made. (d) St. Paul speaks of *trusting in Christ* as that which was peculiar to true saints, and the same with saving faith: (e)

The doctor also speaks of his *strivers* as “ *those who take Jesus Christ for their guide, and heartily desire to know the truth as it is in him.*” (f) He speaks of this as necessary in order to be secure from fatal error. This therefore implies a receiving the

(a) 1 John, v. 4, 5, compared with v. 1. (b) Eph. vi. 10, &c. (c) P. 20, 39, 40. (d) See Psal. xlii. 5, xxxiii. 18, cxlviii. 11. xxxi. 19, xxxiv. 22, cxxv. 1, &c. (e) Eph. i. 12, 13. (f) P. 17.

love of the truth : for they who do not so, are liable to be given up to strong delusion, according to St. Paul's account of the matter. (g) But to *receive the love of the truth*, is to *love the truth* : And what is this but to love God and holiness ? Which is the same with exercising holiness. To take Jesus Christ for our guide, is to submit to him and trust in him in his character of a teacher or prophet, which supposes a heart friendly to Christ, and is really an hearty embracing the gospel. For he who heartily submits to, and trusts in, Christ, or cordially acknowledges him in any part of his true character, is really reconciled to the whole of it. And this is the same thing with being reconciled to God thro' Jesus Christ, or embracing the gospel. But this surely is not the character of the unregenerate.

Another passage of the doctor's is in the following words. " Our Saviour, who certainly knew
 " every thing relating to this affair, enjoins us to
 " *strive* ; or, if the word may be allowed, *to agonize*, that we may enter into life : plainly im-
 " porting that the business of religion is at once of
 " such vast importance, and attended with such
 " difficulties, as to call for the most anxious con-
 " cern, the most fixed resolutions, and unwearied
 " endeavours. And there are divers metaphors
 " used in scripture, relative to this matter, which
 " naturally suggest the same thing to us : Particu-
 " larly those of *wrestling*, *running*, and *fighting* ;
 " which express efforts of strength and activity,
 " joined with wariness and circumspection. These

(g) 2 *Thess.* ii. 10, 11.

are all applied to the exercises, duties and employments of THE CHRISTIAN LIFE." (b) What could he have said more to the purpose, if he had undertaken to prove that striving to enter in at the strait gate intends not the doings of the unregenerate, but the exercises and work of the real christian? He has, at least, strongly asserted this here, however inconsistent with his main design. If the doctor had been as sensible of this, as perhaps he ought, he could have proceeded no further; as he must have seen the impropriety of applying that *striving*, &c. to the doings of the unregenerate, which, according to his own account of the matter, denotes the character and exercises of those only who are born of God.

He appears indeed not wholly unthoughtful of this matter: for upon a review of his description of striving to enter in at the strait gate, he has these words, "If it should be asked, whether any unregenerate sinner can be supposed to strive *in the manner represented above?* I answer, YES; at least in general. There is *very little*, if *any thing* in this account of striving, &c. which would necessarily suppose a person to be already born of the Spirit of God." (i) And again he says, "Possibly *one or two expressions* used in that description, are in strictness applicable to the regenerate only; *tho' I am not at present sensible of ANY SUCH*" (k) It seems to be a pity, as well as somewhat strange, that he was not sensible, that not only *one or two expressions*, but a considerable number, are applicable only to the endeavours of the regenerate; and

(b) P. 32, 33. (i) P. 21. (k) P. 47, margin.

that his *whole description*, taken together, is properly applicable to none but such : For this would most probably have undeceived him with respect to this whole affair. For, I trust, it will appear in the sequel, that the doctor has thro' his whole performance exalted the unregenerate and their doings too high ; and in order to support what he contends for, has represented them as having those exercises which indeed they never have, but are peculiar to the regenerate : and that most of his arguments take all their seeming strength and plausibleness from this.

But what if "*very little*," and but "one or two expressions used in that description, are in strictness applicable to the regenerate only?" This is certainly a *little too much* ; and renders him so far inconsistent with himself ; which no man chooses to be, if he can help it. For he has declared that not to strive in the manner he has described, is fatal, and connected with a being forever excluded the kingdom of heaven. By which he has at one stroke cut off all connection of the doings of the unregenerate with salvation, and landed them in despair. Which connection he nevertheless thinks he has proved to a demonstration ! His words are these. "I was in the next place to shew you the fatal consequences of not striving to enter in at the strait gate : Or, in other words, of not using your endeavours to obtain eternal life, *in the manner represented above.*" (1) If the fatal consequences which he goes on to mention, will certainly follow on their not striving IN THE MAN-

(1) P. 22.

NER REPRESENTED ABOVE ; and if *any thing* comes into the description of that striving, which no unregenerate persons attain to, but is peculiar to the regenerate ; then the unregenerate do not strive, or use their endeavours to obtain eternal life, *in that manner* : and consequently do nothing which will prevent these fatal consequences coming on them ; and therefore nothing which has any certain connection with eternal life, but rather with everlasting destruction. So that if the doctor has, after all this, proved that any of the endeavours of the unregenerate are connected with eternal life, he has done it contrary to his own express assertion, if but *very little* that is peculiar to the regenerate comes into the manner of the endeavours to obtain salvation which he has described. But if *very much* which comes into his account of striving to enter in at the strait gate, necessarily supposes a person to be born of the spirit of God, which, I trust, appears beyond contradiction, this makes his inconsistency with himself still more glaring.

However, tho' the doctor's text, as he understands it, seems to be rather against him ; and his own description of striving, &c. is inconsistent with his whole scheme : and is, the whole taken together, in direct contradiction to the point he endeavours by *fourteen* arguments to prove : yet, if he has, after all this, rightly stated, and undeniably proved it, we must yield it to him, however inconsistent he is with himself.

I therefore now proceed to enquire into this matter.

SECTION

SECTION II.

THE Doctor's stating the question examined.

THE doctor states the question in dispute three different times, in different words: But it may be queried, Whether he has stated it properly, or in any degree right, in either of his attempts? He first puts it in the following words, "Whether
 " there are in the word of God, any gracious promises, invitations, or declarations, respecting un-
 " regenerate sinners, to whom the gospel is preached, from whence it may be clearly inferred, that
 " if they strive IN THE MANNER THEY MAY
 " AND OUGHT TO DO, to attain to holiness and
 " eternal life, God will certainly afford them all
 " the influences of his spirit and grace, which are
 " necessary to that end: so that their endeavours shall
 " not be in vain, but succeeded by him, and rendered effectual to their salvation?" "This," the doctor says, "it is humbly conceived, is a fair, just
 " and plain state of the important question proposed." (m) Doubtless he thought so. But, what does he mean by unregenerate sinners striving *in the manner they may and ought to do*? They ought to strive as true saints do; in a holy manner. This the doctor himself acknowledges; for he says,

(m) P. 45.

“ That all who hear the gospel, are *required*, not
“ only to believe it, but to *repent of their sins*, and
“ to become the *true disciples* of Jesus Christ” (n)
If they are *required* to repent, &c. then they may
and ought to repent, and become *true disciples* of
Christ ; and therefore *may and ought* to strive in the
exercise of true repentance, and as real christians.
And if so, then the question, as the doctor has put
it, comes to this : *Whether, if unregenerate sinners*
become true penitents and real christians, and as
such, in the exercise of true faith and holiness,
strive to obtain the salvation of their souls, they are
hereby intitled to a divine promise of success ?

The question therefore, as the doctor has stated
it, is not disputed by those whom he means to op-
pose. For they all allow, that if unregenerate sin-
ners, strive as they may and ought to do, they shall
certainly obtain salvation. But at the same time
they may and ought to strive in a right manner,
i. e. as real penitents and true christians : and the
doctor is so happy as to agree with them in this too.
Where is the dispute then ? We can have none
with him on this question ; for we hold the affir-
mative as fully as he can. And now, Whether
this is a “ fair, just and plain state of the important
question proposed,” let the impartial judge. The
doctor knew, or ought to have known, that they
whom he meant to oppose, hold that no unregene-
rate sinner strives for salvation as he may and ought
to do : and if he had believed the contrary, he
ought not to take it for granted, in stating the ques-
tion to be disputed : for this, instead of putting

(n) P. 66:

the question in a *fair, just and plain light*, is really *begging the question*. But as he does not himself believe that unregenerate sinners ever strive thus, but has affirmed they do not, this his state of the question, is not only, not fair, or just, but some what surprizing.

The question really is, whether unregenerate sinners while they do nothing but what is consistent with a state of unregeneracy, *i. e.* reigning wickedness of heart, do ever so strive for salvation, as that by their *thus striving*, they are intitled to those gracious promises, whereby God is engaged to bestow eternal life upon them ?

BUT let us see if the doctor has succeeded better in his *second attempt*. This is in the following words. “ Whether the gracious declarations and
 “ promises of God in his word, are such as will
 “ in any measure admit of the supposition, that
 “ unregenerate sinners, to whom the gospel is
 “ preached, may *desire*, strive, and earnestly endeavour, in the use of proper means; to obtain
 “ the salvation revealed therein, seeking to God
 “ for his Grace and assistance; and yet possibly
 “ fall short of eternal life, and perish in their sins,
 “ by reason that God withholds his spirit and grace
 “ from them?” He thinks, “ the question thus stated, comes precisely to the same thing as in the former way.” Perhaps it does. But if so, then the matter is not mended; and the question is still far from being rightly stated, as has been shewn. All the difficulty in this state of the question lies in the word DESIRE. If he uses this word in the sense in which it is commonly used, we shall
 all

all agree with him and allow, that the gracious declarations and promises of God in his word, are such as will not admit of the supposition, that they who *desire the salvation revealed in the gospel*, can possibly fall short of eternal life. This therefore is not the question in dispute. The promises of the gospel are beyond question made to all who *heartily desire* the things promised. But then we assert that no unregenerate person does really and heartily desire these things. But of this more hereafter.

The doctor goes on to say, " It may be reduced to another form, and still narrower compass thus, viz. Whether unregenerate sinners, under the dispensation of the gospel, have *any* day of grace and salvation afforded them; in such a sense, that they shall certainly obtain eternal life, provided *they heartily desire it*, and strive to that end." Still we are all agreed, none, I trust, will deny this.

He says, " He has expressed the *true point in question*, in these *several ways*, not meerly for the sake of having it understood; but partly, because he supposed, that the bare stating it *thus*, would go a considerable ways towards a proper resolution of it, with those who are tolerably acquainted with the general tenor of the holy scripture; unless their minds are unhappily prepossessioned in favor of some unscriptural scheme of systematical divinity." If he has indeed expressed the *true point in question*, it appears to be easily resolved, from what has been observed: For nobody seems to have any dispute with him. But that he should imagine this to be the *true point in question*

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question ; and that what he here fixes upon as the condition of the promises of the gospel, is ever come up to by unregenerate sinners, must, I think, be owing to his not being tolerably acquainted with the general tenor of holy scripture : unless perhaps his mind is unhappily prepossessed in favor of some *unscriptural* scheme of *UNsystematical* divinity. But this will be more particularly considered by and by.

Thus it appears that the whole matter in dispute is in the doctor's way of stating the question overlooked, or rather taken for granted ; for if unregenerate sinners ever actually do what he supposes they must do in order to have an interest in the promises, without question promises of salvation as made to their doings. But that unregenerate men ever do thus, lies on the doctor to prove, which he has not so much as attempted any where ; but as he has taken it for granted in stating the question, he has done so thro' his whole performance, and from beginning to end, intirely mis-stated the matter, and really begged the whole question in dispute.

I will now take leave to give what appears to me to be a fair, just and plain state of this important question before us.

QUEST. Are there any gracious promises of salvation to the exercises and doings of unregenerate sinners, who do not strive for salvation as they ought to do ; who have no true and hearty desires of the salvation offered in the gospel ; but are so far from it, that they are under the reigning power of enmity against God and the Saviour, and do with their whole heart oppose the way of salvation opened in the gospel ;

gospel; and continually reject the salvation it self, and obstinately refuse to have any part therein, notwithstanding it is freely offered to their choice and acceptance? The bare stating the question thus, I suppose, will go a considerable ways towards a proper resolution of it, even with all. The doctor himself, I presume, will fully and chearfully espouse the negative of this question, thus stated. But then he may perhaps complain, that the true point in question is not expressed, or at least is not fairly stated; because the exercises and doings of unregenerate sinners are not justly represented; and that is taken for granted in this state of the case, which he shall dispute, and really is the only thing in question. But would not such a complaint be really against himself, while the same objection lies against his own state of the question? I say, the doctor has raised the unregenerate man too high, and represented him as doing more than ever he does. On the other hand he says, I sink him too low, and represent all his exercises and doings in much too bad a light. Who does not see that I have as good a right to take for granted what I assert of the doings of the unregenerate man, as he has, what he has asserted? All must see, I think, by this time, that in order to understand and settle the question before us, it must be first determined, what can be justly predicated of the doings of unregenerate sinners: and that a just resolution of this will put an end to the dispute. If it can be proved that the doctor's unregenerate sinner is a creature only of his own fancy; a kind of monster; an enemy to God, dressed up in the attire of a saint, a contradiction almost in terms: then all he

has said, and attempted to prove of such an one, is really nothing to the purpose. Here then we must join issue, and leave it to the world to judge, who is on the right side of the question.

SECTION III.

IN which it is considered, What is meant by DESIRING Salvation; and how far, and in what sense, unregenerate persons may be said to do so.

THE doctor often speaks of sinners *desiring salvation*. With relation to this, he uses the word DESIRE above thirty times in this argument. He calls it a *sincere* desire, a *real* and a *heartly* desire. This is a word of great importance with him. According to him, they who do not heartily and earnestly *desire* salvation, do not strive for it so as to obtain, and so are not in the way to it.^(o) And on the other hand, he often speaks of this *desire* of salvation, as that which will not, cannot fail of success: as if it was the only necessary condition on the sinner's part, to which all the promises in the gospel are made. And most of his arguments derive all their force and strength from this word. 'Tis proper therefore in the first place

(o) P. 12.

particularly to attend to this, and enter into the true meaning of it; otherwise we may dispute altogether in the dark.

Since the doctor makes so much of this word, and speaks so often of an *heartly desire of salvation*, and builds so much upon it; it might have been expected that he would have given such a plain definition of this phrase, and so explained the matter, that none could be left at a loss about his meaning. But this he has not done; we must therefore find out his meaning as well as we can, by considering the various passages in which he uses these words, together with what they are connected. It is plain at first view, that he means to speak of the *desires* of unregenerate persons; but the question is, whether he means only those desires of salvation, which are indeed compatible to an unregenerate man; or something which is never found with such, however he may suppose it; but is peculiar to the regenerate?

By desiring salvation, or eternal life, he evidently means the same with *choosing* it, in the same sense in which the people of Israel were exhorted to *choose life*.^(p) The doctor speaking of that passage observes, that life was set before them “for their choice,” and then has the following words, “And if so, the obtaining it *depended on their choice*, or was connected therewith. And doubtless, it is not less truly and properly set before sinners now, under the gospel dispensation, than it was before the Israelites in the time of Moses. From whence we may conclude, that if we re-

^(p) *Deut. xxx. 19, See p. 53, 54;*

22 *Of unregenerate persons desiring salvation.*

“ *ally desire*, and strive to enter into life, we shall
 “ not fall short of it.” (q) And in another passage he represents this *real desire* of salvation as being the same with *accepting of it*, and *coming to Christ* for it, or at least as implying this. (r) Having observed that “ the scriptures speak plainly and directly of sinners neglecting the opportunity allowed them for obtaining life, as the real cause of their death or destruction,” he proceeds to illustrate this by various passages of scripture, such as, “ how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation? Ye *will not* come unto me, that ye might have life. O Jerusalem—how often would I have gathered thy children—and ye *would not*, &c.” And then says, “ These, with innumerable
 “ other passages of scripture, most clearly and
 “ strongly express this sentiment ; That the true
 “ and only reason why sinners perish, is,—that
 “ they *neglect* the great salvation offered to them,
 “ and *will not* come to Jesus Christ for life. But
 “ neither of these things can be truly and properly
 “ said of those persons, who are awakened to
 “ such a sense of their sins, as *really to desire* the
 “ salvation revealed, and to strive in order there-
 “ to.” From these, and other passages of the same import, I think it plainly appears, that by a *real desire of salvation*, he means a hearty choice of life, a true acceptance of salvation, and coming to Christ for life, or a taking and accepting of the good things freely offered in the gospel. He has therefore set himself an easy task, while he undertakes to prove, that they who thus desire salvation

and strive in the exercise of these desires, shall certainly obtain; for all the promises of the gospel are constantly made to such, without all question; and instead of *fourteen* arguments, which the doctor has produced to prove this, one might easily assign as many score, perhaps as strong, and as much to the purpose. But that the unregenerate ever did, or ever will, thus desire, choose, and accept of this salvation, and come to Christ for it, is denied by those whom the doctor means to oppose: And what is more, is in the strongest and most express terms denied by our Saviour himself. He says, “No man can come unto me, except the father which hath sent me, draw him.—Every man therefore that hath heard, and learned of the Father, cometh unto me.” (s)

The doctor says, “that neither of these things” *i. e.* a neglect of the great salvation, a refusal to come to Christ for life, &c. “can be truly and properly said of those persons, who are awakened to such a sense of their sins, as *really to desire* the salvation revealed, and to strive in order thereto: *even tho’ they are not* (WHICH IS VERY SUPPOSABLE) *already in a regenerate state.*” (t) This is *very supposable* we see; for the doctor has abundantly *supposed* it, thro’ the whole course of his argument, and built all upon this *supposition*, as has been observed. But it is presumed he will not be able to *prove*, what has been with him so *very supposable*, as Jesus Christ, who doubtless well understood this matter, has not only supposed, but expressly asserted, directly the contrary, in the words just quoted.

(s) John vi. 44, 45. (t) P. 56.

24 *Of unregenerate persons desiring salvation.*

THE doctor allows that unregenerate persons are not *true believers* or *real christians*; and are without all real holiness. (u) Consequently they do not love, choose or desire holiness: but this is the object of their greatest and peculiar aversion. Therefore the salvation offered in the gospel, which is in a peculiar sense an *holy* salvation and consists summarily in true holiness, they are so far from *desiring*, that nothing else is hated and rejected by them, with such constancy, and so much with their whole heart, as this. And this is the only thing that keeps them from an interest in this salvation; as who ever is willing to take it as 'tis offered, has it: and it is certainly bestowed *on every one who desires and chooses it*, so asks for it; which is the same with coming to Christ for life.

UNREGENERATE sinners may, while they continue such, in some sense desire salvation. They may desire deliverance from natural evil, between which and salvation there is no medium: and they may desire safety and happiness, under a conviction of conscience, that it is to be had in no other way but by sharing in the salvation which is by Jesus Christ. Such a desire as this every person under the gospel has, in some degree, who has any belief of the truth of divine revelation: And these desires are strong, and influence the conduct of men, in proportion to their attention to these things, and their apprehension and sense of the importance of them to themselves. But this is consistent with their hating the true character of the only Saviour, and the salvation which

(u) P. 42, 43.

he offers freely for their acceptance ; and their continuing to reject it with their whole hearts. It is but to delude sinners, to represent to them, that their concern and desires of this kind, are the least evidence that their hearts are a whit the nearer a true submission to Christ, or a real acceptance of salvation as offered by him ; or that there is the less opposition to the gospel in their hearts. If the doctor, by his **DESIRES** of salvation, means such desires as these, which most men under the gospel have in a greater or less degree, and had explained himself, most of his arguments would appear in their true weakness, to every one at first view. But these are not truly and properly desires of the salvation offered in the gospel, according to the most common and natural meaning of the word : because that salvation is not properly the object of these desires, but something else ; yea, salvation as it is offered is not desired, but rejected. If any particular gift or privilege is offered to a person, and nothing required as the condition of his having it, but his hearty acceptance of it ; he cannot be said to desire it according to the sense in which the word is generally used, if the gift offered is in itself undesirable to him, or if, all things considered, he is not willing to have it, and refuses to take it ; however exercised he may be about the matter, and whatever pains he may take with relation to it.

The salvation revealed in the gospel, is offered freely to the acceptance of all ; the proclamation is, “ *Whosoever will, let him come and take it.*” And they who dislike and reject this salvation, and the Saviour himself by whom it is offered, and are, on the whole, all things considered, *unwilling* to
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be saved by him, cannot be properly said to *desire* this salvation; but it may truly be said that they *do not desire* to be saved by Christ. The words of *I*saiah are very applicable to such; and of such he doubtless speaks, when he says, "When we shall see him (*i. e.* the Messiah) there is no beauty that we should *desire* him. He is despised and rejected of men. (x) Despising and rejecting any object is surely inconsistent with, and in direct opposition to *desiring* it. Therefore there is not one instance in scripture of any person's being spoken of as *desiring salvation*, who was not heartily willing to accept of it as it is offered; but such are represented as *not desiring it*. If therefore the doctor uses this word in a sense directly contrary to that in which it is used in holy scripture, and in common speech; and so in a very strange and improper sense it might reasonably have been expected that he would give notice of it, and so explain himself, as to prevent mistake and delusion in this matter, in which mistakes are so easily and so often made, especially by the inattentive and unwary. But as it is evident from what has been taken notice of already, that he, at least some times, means something else by his desires of salvation, I proceed to observe,

Men may most properly be said really and heartily to desire salvation, when the salvation itself is the object of their desires, the good things in which it consists being what they are pleased with, and choose for their own sake; and this implies a hearty approbation of the character of the Saviour.

(x) *I*saiah liii. 2, 3.

and the way of salvation by him. They who have such a desire of salvation as this do truly choose life, and may properly be said to accept of salvation; to *receive* Jesus Christ and come to him for life, or believe on his name. The doctor seems to mean such kind of desires as these, by the desires of salvation he speaks so much of, as has been shewn. It is quoted, as has been before observed, that to such desires as these the promises of the gospel are made; therefore they who thus desire salvation shall not fail of it. But such desires as these are holy desires; and therefore are found nowhere but in a regenerate heart. The love of holiness is it self an exercise of holiness: but an hearty desire of holiness for its own sake, implies and is indeed itself, an exercise of love to holiness. Now to desire salvation for its own sake, because 'tis what it is, is to desire holiness for its own sake: for holiness comes into the very essence of this salvation. And that approbation of the character of the Saviour, which is implied in true desires of salvation by him, also implies love to him, and consequently is an exercise of love to holiness: for holiness is an essential, and the most important part of the character of the Saviour, without which he could not be the Saviour of sinners.

The salvation which the gospel reveals, the way in which it is bestowed, and the Saviour himself, are if I may so speak, so cloathed with holiness, and such a bright expression of it, which is the peculiar excellency and glory of the gospel, that the unholy are set at the greatest distance from these things; and men never will desire and choose them untill they have a heart friendly to holiness, which is

the *new heart* given in regeneration. If the unregenerate have an heart to desire and choose the salvation offered in the gospel, in the sense now explained, it will be difficult to shew what need they stand in of regeneration in order to be saved, or to tell what regeneration consists in. For if men have an heart to desire and choose holiness for holiness sake, and so to delight in it, as they must, in order to desire and choose the salvation offered in the gospel, and come to Christ, they have no need of a *new heart* in order to be holy, and happy in God and the Saviour: this same principle from whence such desires flow being perfected, they will be perfectly united to the Saviour, and compleatly delivered from sin and misery, and in full possession of salvation. The need men stand in therefore of being regenerated, or of having a new heart given them, is a demonstration that the unregenerate have no such desires.

And this is agreeable to the whole current of scripture representation, as might be easily shewn, was there need of it. The scripture ranks all mankind in two classes. Those that love God and his ways, who know and choose the things that are excellent; and those the language of whose hearts to God is, "depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways;" who are enemies to the just God and Saviour, and neglect and refuse the salvation offered. Of these, some may be more concerned about themselves than others, and so have more exercises, and take more pains to escape eternal misery: but still their hearts are as opposite to reconciliation with God, and to the salvation offered as ever; they have still an heart of stone,

a stubborn rebellious heart, and are dead in trespasses and sins, untill they have a new heart given them; and they are quickened by regeneration.

If the doctor will shew from scripture, that there are some persons who are neither dead in trespasses and sins, nor alive to God; who are neither enemies to God and the Saviour, nor his friends and reconciled to him: or if he will tell what need they stand in of regeneration, who have these hearty desires of salvation, which are inconsistent with a hard heart, a neglecting the great salvation offered them, and a refusing to come to Christ for life, and will plainly shew what such a regeneration consists in, he will doubtless greatly oblige the christian world. But till this is done, we must take leave to conclude, that the desires of the unregenerate he speaks of, and the regeneration of those who first have these desires, are a figment of his own.

SECTION IV.

AN examination of nine of the Doctor's fourteen arguments.

WHAT the doctor, undertakes to support is, that the endeavours and striving of the *unregenerate* have a promise of success; and so are certainly

certainly connected with salvation. This he attempts to prove by *fourteen* arguments. It appears at first view they are not wanting in number: the weight and strength of them is now to be inquired into. At least *nine* of these fourteen have all their strength in the words **DESIRE** of salvation, or words to the like purpose; in which the unregenerate sinner is supposed to have such a *desire of salvation* which implies a real *choice* of it as it is offered; and a hearty acceptance of it, and coming to Christ for it. Now as this supposition is intirely groundless and contrary to the truth, as has been shewn in the last section, all those arguments, which are built wholly upon it, are demolished and fall of course. But that this may clearly appear, we will briefly consider each of them.

ARG. 1st “ Mankind being considered in scripture as in a state of sin and death, it is declared “ that Jesus Christ came into the world to save “ them: to *save sinners*; to *seek and to save that* “ *which was lost.*” (y) The doctor, proceeds, to illustrate this by several passages of scripture, and then adds, “ Now, from such declarations of holy “ scripture, we may fairly infer that all those to “ whom the gospel is preached, have therein an “ offer of salvation made to them. And if it really makes an offer, or points out a method of “ salvation to all; can it be supposed, that any “ sinner **WHO IS WILLING AND DESIROUS**, and strives, to obtain the salvation thus “ revealed, should yet be rejected of God and finally perish? Certainly it cannot.” (z) The

whole of this is granted. But what does it prove? that salvation is offered to the acceptance of all : and therefore whoever is so " desirous " to obtain the salvation thus revealed as to " be willing " to have it, and heartily accept of it, shall not be rejected. Nothing can be more certain than this. But what is this to an unregenerate sinner who *will not* come to Christ for life, and continues to make light of, and reject, the salvation offered to him?

ARG. 2d. " God hath declared in the most solemn manner that he hath no pleasure in the death of sinners. (a) Yea, it is declared, that God *will have all men to be saved*. Now if what these declarations most obviously and strongly import, be true : surely all who REALLY DESIRE and strive to obtain eternal life, will certainly obtain it. For if God himself hath no pleasure in their death, but the contrary ; and if they themselves *desire life* and endeavour to obtain it, what should hinder their salvation ? Can the devil be supposed to hinder it on these suppositions ? He cannot, unless, he is stronger, not only than man, but than God himself." (b) Very strongly expressed : And very true ; But what is all this to the case in hand ? to the unregenerate who are so far from *desiring life*, that they choose and love death rather than life ; (c) and are the children of disobedience, in whom the devil powerfully worketh : (d) yea, the children of the devil, whose lusts they will do, (e) being voluntarily in his kingdom and under his power ?

(a) Ezek xxxiii 11. (b) P 49. (c) Prov. viii. 36. (d) Eph. ii. 2. (e) John viii. 44. 1 John iii. 10.

ARG. 3d. "According to the representation of
 " scripture, God affords to sinners a space for repen-
 " tance, a day of grace and salvation : or a season for
 " making their peace with him ; during which
 " time, he is *said* to be near, so that he *may be found*
 " by them that seek him. Yea, God is repre-
 " sented as long suffering towards them, being un-
 " willing that they should perish." Having men-
 " tioned a number of texts to this purpose, he says.
 " Now, is it consistent with these repeated decla-
 " rations, to suppose that sinners during the time
 " of their visitation, may **REALLY DESIRE** and
 " strive to enter in at the strait gate ; and yet fall
 " short of salvation ?" (*f*) All true yet, if *really*
desiring and striving imply a hearty acceptance of
 offered mercy : But nothing to the purpose. The
 unregenerate sinner, whose heart is as hard as a stone,
 who refuses to repent, and embrace the gospel, is left
 out of the question, and may perish notwithstanding
 all these declarations. The following words, upon
 this argument are perhaps worthy a transcription.
 " If God is long suffering, *not willing that any* of
 " those sinners, to whom the gospel is preached,
 " should perish, but that *all* should come to re-
 " pentance ; certainly he puts them all into a ca-
 " pacity for attaining salvation." If he means, they
 may be saved *if they will* ; or that nothing can pre-
 vent their salvation but the want of their good will
 in the case, as 'tis presumed he does, his argument
 is acknowledged to be just : But he goes on to say,
 " To suppose that any are left in such a state, *that*
 " *they cannot avoid perishing, tho' they desire it :*

“ or in such a state as renders repentance *impossible*
 “ for them; manifestly supposes, that God *wills*
 “ *them to perish*, that he *would not* have them come
 “ to repentance; nor really allows them a space
 “ for it in any proper sense: and so is directly
 “ contrary to the doctrine of scripture.” All may
 be saved who truly desire it, and repentance is im-
 possible to none who are willing to repent. But
 if the unregenerate, do always refuse to repent, there
 being no difficulty in the way of their repentance
 and salvation, but the obstinacy of their own will,
 what is all this to the doctors purpose? In this
 passage the doctor fully shews that by desiring sal-
 vation, he intends the sinners good will in the case;
 and supposes that the unregenerate may be so well
 disposed towards repentance and salvation as that
 if they perish, it must be owing, not to any deficien-
 cy in their hearts but to some fatal difficulty which
 God has laid in their way which it is impossible
 their good will should remove. He adds,—“ But
 “ let the unbiaſſed judge.” And so say I.—let
 them judge, whether the doctor had any reason to
 make such a representation as this: or whether it
 is any thing to the purpose.

ARG. 4th. “ It is further to be remarked, that
 “ during this space given for repentance, or that
 “ day of salvation, which the scriptures so plainly
 “ assert: sinners are earnestly admonished, ex-
 “ horted and commanded, to seek God, to be re-
 “ conciled to him, and to work out their salvati-
 “ on.” (g) And having produced a number of pas-
 sages to this purpose, he draws the consequence in

the following words. “ These exhortations and
 “ commands, are directed more especially to sin-
 “ ners ; to *the wicked* ; to *simple ones*, scorn-
 “ ers and fools ; to such as were not yet *reconciled*
 “ to God. And can any unprejudiced man think
 “ it consistent with them, to suppose, that sinners
 “ may be awakened to such a sense of their misery
 “ in being in a state of alienation from God, as to
 “ *desire* to be reconciled to him, and really strive
 “ to obtain a part in the salvation thus revealed ;
 “ and yet fail of it ! Judge for yourselves”—We
 will—And therefore conclude, that these exhorta-
 tions and commands being given to the wicked,
 scorners, and fools, &c. who are the same with
 the unregenerate, is no argument that they require
 nothing but what such may comply with, and yet
 remain wicked, scorners, and fools ; but they are
 required to *leave off scorning* ; to *forsake the fool-
 ish*, &c. That they who do this, and so truly
desire to be reconciled to God i.e. are in any degree
 reconciled to God at heart, shall not fail of salvari-
 on. But simple ones, scorners, and fools, or the
 unregenerate, never do this, while they remain
 such. And now what is become of the doctors
 arguments?—Let the reader judge for himself.

ARG. 5th. “ Conformably hereto, life and
 “ death, blessing and cursing, are said to be set
 “ before sinners, in the word of God, and they
 “ are admonished to *choose* life.(b)--But with what
 “ truth or propriety could life and death be said to
 “ be set before sinners, if tho’ they *desired* life, and
 “ heartily endeavoured to obtain it, they might

(b) *Deut. xxx. 19.*

yet

“ yet fail thereof?”(i) Life is undoubtedly set before sinners *for their choice*. If therefore they comply with the offer and exhortation, and *choose life*. they will certainly have it. But what is this to the sinner, who does, not choose, but obstinately refuses the life offered to him? this is true of every unregenerate person, as has been shewn.

ARG. 6th. “ The scripture speaks of some sinners as wholly left, and forsaken of God, in this world; given up to their own hearts lusts, to incurable blindness, to strong delusion, &c. that they *might be damned*. Now if there is any such thing as such like passages of scripture seem to assert; and as they are usually understood; it will even from hence follow, that the persons thus given up of God, were, antecedently hereto, in a salvable state; that they had in some measure the restraints and strivings of God’s spirit; that they were really put into a capacity for obtaining salvation, **HAD THEY DESIRED IT**; and that *their not doing so*, was the reason of their being thus forsaken.”(k)

It is sufficient to observe upon all this, that there is no advance made by this argument, it being the *same* with the foregoing, only in a little different words. All that the doctor attempts to prove here is, that if the sinner under the gospel is not saved, but is given up to ruin, it is because he does not desire and choose salvation when offered to him, but neglects and refuses it. But how does this help the unregenerate, who always do this?

(i) P. 53.

(k) P. 54.

ARG. 7th. "The scriptures speak plainly and directly of sinners neglecting the opportunity allowed them for obtaining life, as the real cause of their death or destruction." Hence he infers in allusion to the scriptures he here quotes, "That the true and only reason why sinners perish, is, that they do not *regard* the hand of God, stretched out to save them; that they grieve him by their obduracy in sin; that they *neglect* the great salvation offered to them; and *will not come* to Jesus Christ for life." But neither of these things can be truly and properly said of those persons, who are awakened to such a sense of their sins, as *really to desire* the salvation revealed; and to strive in order thereto; even tho' they are not (which is very supposeable) already in a regenerate state. And therefore all such persons, *unless they cease to desire* and strive thus, shall be saved." [Tis well he has thought of his perseverance to the end of life *once*, which he had hitherto in every argument entirely forgot or rather implicitly denied as necessary in order to be interested in the promises. But he goes on] "Not to be sure, without being born of God: but they shall be *renewed in the spirit of their minds*; and consequently enter into life." (1) What has been said upon this passage in the last section, is sufficient to convince any attentive impartial person, I trust, that what the doctor here takes to be "very supposeable," is plainly contrary to scripture and all reason: and therefore the argument being built upon a most

(1) P. 55, 56, 57.

evidently false hypothesis, as are all the other, is much too weak to bear its own weight.

I SHALL at present pass over the next *five* arguments, leaving them to be more particularly considered by and by ; and now attend to the *two last*, as they seem to be exactly of the same stamp with those already mentioned ; and therefore most properly put with them.

ARG. 13th. " It is very generally allowed, " that all those in general, who hear the gospel ; " are invited and required, not only to believe it, " but to repent of their sins, and to become the " true disciples of Jesus Christ. It is moreover " universally acknowledged, that the gospel pro- " mises eternal life to all who do thus, or to all " real christians : And it is represented as a won- " derful manifestation of the goodness of God to " men, that he should, in this way, promise " salvation to them. Now, if these conceptions " and representations are just, as they unquestion- " ably are ; it may from hence be clearly inferred, " that there is grace accompanying the dispensation " of the gospel, sufficient to render it effectual to " the salvation of those, who hear it, PROVID- " ED THEY ARE REALLY DESIROUS " OF, and endeavour after it." All very true. But what if they are not really desirous of it ; but oppose and reject it ? And if this is true of all the unregenerate, the argument comes to nothing.

ARG. 14th. " It is very generally allowed, that " those

" those who, having had the gospel preached unto
 " them, do not actually comply with the method
 " of salvation revealed therein, and so finally ob-
 " tain eternal life, will have an aggravated con-
 " demnation at the last day. This is agreeable to
 " the representations of scripture in many places.
 " But what reason? What justice, would there
 " be in this, if these sinful and unhappy men were
 " never really put into a capacity for obtaining
 " this salvation? or never had it made possible to
 " them, *tho' they desired* and endeavoured to be-
 " come partakers of it? "

I answer, No reason, or justice at all. But
 what is this to his purpose? All sinners under the
 gospel are " really put into a capacity for obtain-
 ing salvation:" and that whether they *desire* and
 accept of this salvation or not; it being freely of-
 fered to their choice and acceptance. In this
 sense it is made possible to all; and their constant-
 ly neglecting and refusing to desire and endeavour
 to become partakers of it, does not alter the case
 with respect to this, If therefore they miss of
 this salvation, because *they do not desire it*, but ne-
 glect and refuse it, which is true of all unregene-
 rate men; then this is very consistent with their
 falling under " an aggravated condemnation,"
 because they " do not actually comply with the
 method of salvation revealed."

NINE of the doctors fourteen arguments have
 now been considered. And as they are all built
 upon one hypothesis, which has no truth in it, the
 falsehood of that being detected, they appear to be
 perfectly weak and inconclusive,

Indeed

Indeed, these *nine* arguments are really but *one*. As they are all built on one hypothesis, so the predicate in each is much one and the same, as the attentive reader may easily see by looking over them. The number therefore adds nothing to the weight. They may be easily reduced to *one*; and that, to *nothing*. Or if he had pleased he might have added an hundred, yea as many as there are promises in the bible, as weighty and as much to the purpose as any of these.

“ But let the the unbyassed judge,”

SECTION V.

IN which three of the remaining five of the Doctor's arguments are examined.

THE doctor's *eighth, tenth, and eleventh* arguments are so nearly *one*; or at least run so much into one and the same thing, that they may be considered together. These are stated in the following words, “ Sinners have a promise of the spirit of wisdom, or of spiritual wisdom, with which eternal life is connected, if they hearken to God's reproof, and diligently seek it. Turn you at my reproof: behold I will pour out my spirit unto you: I will make known my words un-

“ to

“ to you.(m) *Hear instruction and be wise, and*
 “ *refuse it not. Blessed is the man that heareth me,*
 “ *watching daily at my gates, and waiting at the*
 “ *posts of my doors.(n)* And “ Our Saviour pro-
 “ nounces a blessing on those that *hunger and*
 “ *thirst after righteousness*; adding, that *they shall*
 “ *be filled.”(o)* And “ To this promise of our
 “ Lord, another may be subjoined, which is also
 “ found in his sermon on the mount. *Ask, and it*
 “ *shall be given you ; seek, and ye shall find, &c.”(p)*

The doctor attempts to prove that the condition to which these promises of spiritual, saving blessings are made, intends the exercises and doings of the unregenerate. His arguments for this are now carefully to be enquired into.

He having observed, that “ it will perhaps be
 “ said, that none but a regenerate man, can be
 “ supposed to *turn at God's, or wisdom's reproof*
 “ or to *wait at the posts of her doors*, in the sense
 “ here intended,” goes on to say, “ But this were
 “ an arbitrary assertion : one for which there is
 “ not the least colour or foundation. For the per-
 “ sons here addressed, are spoken to under the
 “ character of *simple ones, scorners, and fools* ; who
 “ certainly need wisdom the most of any. And
 “ the promise is apparently made for the encour-
 “ agement of such, to turn at her reproof, and
 “ to watch daily at her gates ; that they might
 “ find her, and thereby *find life*. This was there-
 “ fore to be done by them, *antecedently* to their
 “ obtaining spiritual wisdom ; *not in the actual*
 “ *exercise of it.”(q)*

(m) *Prov. i. 23.*(n) *Chap. viii. 33, 34: See P. 57.*(o) *P. 59.*(p) *P. 61.*(q) *P. 57. 58.*

The persons here addressed are indeed "simple ones, scorers and fools, who certainly need wisdom the most of any." But does it hence follow, that they are not called upon and required to obey and be *wise*; but to do something while they remain scorers and fools, or antecedent to their obtaining wisdom? I think not: But directly the contrary: *viz.* that they are required to embrace wisdom, or be *wise*; to cease from scorning, and become obedient: to forsake the foolish, and live. I trust the doctor will not deny that *turning* at wisdom's reproof implies thus much. And if so, it cannot mean any thing to be done by them while they continue fools and scorers, or consistent with their continuing such. It appears to me an odd way of arguing, to say, that seeing they are addressed in the character of simple ones, scorers, and fools, therefore they are called upon to act according to this character; that is, like simple ones, scorers, and fools. But thus argues the doctor.

And this is not the only instance of the doctor's arguing at this rate. In order to prove that the *asking, seeking, and knocking* our Saviour speaks of, intends the desires, prayers and endeavours of the unregenerate, he says, "The words were spoken by him to the promiscuous multitude of his professed followers; and there is no reason to suppose that all these were in a regenerate state." (*) This is as if a doctor of divinity should gravely undertake to prove that the moral law, contained in the ten commands requires nothing but what unholy,

(*) P. 62.

wicked men do, while such ; because it was published to a promiscuous multitude, many, if not most, of whom were such. The doctor allows, that “ all those in general who hear the gospel, are “ *invited and required to repent of their sins*, and “ to become the *true disciples* of Jesus Christ.” (f) He represents those who will not allow this, to be “ men of a disordered mind, hardly fit to be reasoned with.” If the doctor will not rank himself among these, he must allow that our Saviour, when he preached the gospel on the mount, did invite and require all his hearers to repent and become his *true disciples*, and as such, with a penitent, humble, christian temper of mind, to ask, seek and knock ; however far he knew most of them then to be from such a temper. But this is to give up the argument under consideration, as fit to be used only by “ men of a disordered mind, hardly fit to be reasoned with.” But to return,

The doctor goes on to argue, that if the promise of wisdom in the texts quoted, is not “ made to the turning, waiting and watching of an unregenerate man,” then it amounts to no more than this ; that upon their *first* becoming wise, they shall *then* have wisdom given them. But such a promise, he thinks, not “ agreeable to the wisdom of God.” (t)

This, with his words just now quoted relating to these scriptures, leads to the following remarks.

1. It does not appear that there is any promise of wisdom in these texts, of which they have no degree, who hearken and turn at wisdom's reproof.

(f) P. 66. (t) P. 62.

The thing required here is wisdom. They are exhorted to act directly contrary to what scorers and fools do, which surely is to act wisely. "Hear instruction, and *be wise*, and refuse it not. Blessed is the man that *beareth me*, watching daily at my gates, &c." Hearing instruction is here spoken of as the same with being wise, or as that in which wisdom consists; and not as something which a fool must do, as such, or while he continues a fool, and antecedent to his exercising any wisdom. Therefore such are pronounced blessed who hearken to wisdom, watching daily at her gates, &c. which is itself an exercise of wisdom. We have the same exhortation in a little different words, in the context.(u) "O ye simple, *understand wisdom*; and, ye fools, *be ye of an understanding heart*." None can suppose that what is required here, is something to be done by the simple and fools, "antecedent to their obtaining wisdom;" but they are called upon to be wise.

The same is evident with respect to the other passage referred to by the doctor, "How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity? And the scorers delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge? Turn you at my reproof." Here 'tis supposed that they must cease from loving simplicity, and no longer delight in scorning, and hate knowledge, in order to turn at wisdom's reproof; or rather, that this is implied in the turning required. Therefore turning is an exercise of wisdom and obedience, in opposition to folly and stubbornness. How the doctor could imagine that, here, and in

(u) Prov. viii. 5.

the words before considered, wisdom is promised, upon doing something in which no wisdom is implied, I am at a loss.

It is indeed here promised, that upon their *turning*, wisdom will *make known her words unto them*. But this only intends that they shall be taken into the school of wisdom, in consequence of their being so wise as to embrace her; and shall be trained up by her, as the children of wisdom, to greater degrees of knowledge and understanding. For “the Lord layeth up sound wisdom for the *righteous*.” (x) “To him that *bath* shall be given, and he shall have more abundance.” Give instruction to a *wise man*, and he will be yet wiser: teach a just man, and he will increase in learning.” (y)

This leads to another remark.

2. It is contrary to reason and common sense: Yea, a plain contradiction, to suppose that any person does hearken to the reproofs and instruction of wisdom, and obey her dictates, while a fool, and antecedent to his having and exercising any wisdom. To hearken to wisdom, and turn at her reproof, is surely itself *wise*, or an instance and exercise of wisdom. If the dictates of wisdom itself are wise; then it is not folly, but wisdom, to hearken to them. If this is not wisdom, it will be difficult to shew what is wisdom, or that there is any such thing in the universe.

The doctor concludes this argument by saying, “I may venture to appeal to any wise man, whether such a promise would be agreeable to the wisdom of God.” (z) I will venture my charac-

(x) *Prov.* ii. 7. (y) *Cbap.* ix. 9. (z) P. 58.

ter for wisdom, with the public, and with the doctor himself, so far as to say, that whatever promise is made to hearkening to wisdom, and turning at her reproof, is a promise made to a *wise act* or the exercise of wisdom; and that such a promise may be agreeable to the wisdom of God. And I hope the doctor will, for time to come, be so *wise*, and so much of a divine and philosopher, as not to assert, or even think the contrary.

I COME now to consider the doctors arguments to prove that *hungering and thirsting after righteousness*, intends the exercises of the unregenerate. He says, " *there is not the least ground to doubt but* " that convinced, awakened sinners, may and do " often, thus hunger and thirst after righteousness." (a)

I answer, Hungering and thirsting supposes and implies, yea consists in a relish of, and appetite to, the things hungered and thirsted after. So far therefore as sinners are without any real, true appetite to holiness or righteousness, and have no relish and love for it, But an aversion to it; just so far there is *ground to doubt*, whether they hunger and thirst after it; Yea, there is ground of *assurance* that they do not. But the unregenerate have no such appetite; for their unregeneracy consists in the want of it, and the perfect prevalence and dominion of and inclination and appetite directly contrary hereto. Therefore, whatever else they may hunger and thirst after, they do not hunger and thirst after righteousness.

Besides, if these words of our Saviour are considered in their connection, it will appear unreasonable to apply them to the unregenerate. Hungering and thirsting after righteousness, is spoken of as an abiding, constant exercise, and points out a character, as much as any of the rest of these beatitudes; such as the *poor in spirit*, the *merciful*, the *pure in heart*, &c. The doctor I conclude, will not suppose that the other exercises or characters mentioned here, intend the transient acts of the unregenerate; but the abiding exercises and character of true christians, which are peculiar and essential to them as such. And there is no reason why this *one* expression should be singled out, as belonging to the unregenerate only; and not to those, whose temper and exercises Christ is characterizing thro' this whole passage.

But against this the doctor argues in the following words, "If any should say, that the regenerate only, or such as have already attained unto righteousness, can be supposed to hunger and thirst after righteousness; this were altogether as contrary to reason and good sense, as to say, that a man must eat a good meal, in order to be hungry in a literal sense; and that he must drink an hearty draught, in order to be a-thirst."

The mis-representation and absurdity contained in these words must appear, I think, to all who will calmly attend to the matter. Regeneration does not consist in any exercise of the mind, or any enjoyment: but by being regenerated a foundation is laid in the mind for holy exercises, for hungering and thirsting after righteousness, and eating and drinking in a spiritual sense. In regeneration

eneration is given what may be called an appetite to holiness or a right taste and disposition. And the exercises of this new taste or appetite, in which the mind hungers and thirsts, eats and drinks, and enjoys spiritual objects, follow regeneration, and are the effect of it. The regenerate therefore have not "attained unto righteousness," or active holiness, neither have they eat and drank so as to be satisfied, until the appetite given in regeneration is exercised in hungering and thirsting after holiness; which appetite, thus exercised, is always gratified in the enjoyment of the object towards which it is exercised. And thus the promise of Christ is always fulfilled: For men never are filled or satisfied, but in the exercise of holiness; that is, in loving and delighting in divine things, or in hungering and thirsting after righteousness. But in this way, they never fail of being satisfied or filled. The doctor therefore wholly mis-represents the matter. If he had put the case properly, and according to truth, it would stand thus. "If any should say, that the regenerate only can be supposed to hunger and thirst after righteousness; this were altogether as contrary to reason and good sense, as to say, that a man must" *have a stomach prepared, or an appetite to relish food and drink, in order to his hungering after, or desiring, them.* But that this is *perfectly agreeable* to reason and good sense, I trust, will not be disputed by any one, who has the least degree of either. And it may be therefore added, that to suppose that the unregenerate do ever hunger and thirst after righteousness, as the hungry man desires food, or the thirsty, drink, is altogether as contrary to all reason and good sense,

as to say, that a man wholly destitute of any appetite to food and drink, or with a perfect antipathy against them, is hungry and thirsty in a literal sense, and earnestly longs for them.

The doctor goes on to say, “ This benediction
 “ and promise, more especially respect unregene-
 “ rate, heavy laden sinners : as do also such gra-
 “ cious invitations and promises as these—*Ho, e-
 “ very one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters—
 “ Harken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which
 “ is good.—(b) Whosoever drinketh of the water
 “ that I shall give him, shall never thirst.(c) I
 “ am the bread of life, he that cometh unto me
 “ shall never hunger, and he that believeth on me,
 “ shall never thirst.(d) If any man thirst, let him
 “ come unto me and drink—This he spake of the
 “ spirit, which they that believe on him should re-
 “ ceive.(e)—Whosoever will, let him take the
 “ water of life freely.(f)*

Concerning these passages of scripture it may be observed, 1. That if the invitations and promises contained in them are made to unregenerate sinners, and wholly respect their exercises and doings while such ; then the unregenerate, while such, come to the waters of life, and do actually drink of this water : yea, they come to Christ and believe on him. For the invitation is to this, and to this only the promise is made. Of this any one may be certain, by carefully reading the quoted passages over. It seems the doctor supposes the unregenerate do all this, by his thus quoting these words, as otherwise they are not to his purpose. When he

(b) *Isaiah* lv. 1, 2. (c) *John* iv. 14. (d) *Chap.* vi. 35. (e) *Chap.* vii. 37.—39. (f) *Rev.* xxii. 17.

shall *prove* this, we will acknowledge he has gained his point : but till then, we must be confident that none come to Christ, unless they are drawn by the regenerating influences of God's spirit ; and that they who believe on him are born of God : and that men's unwillingness, or opposition of heart to coming to Christ, to coming and taking the water of life, is the only ground of the necessity of their being born again, in order to see the kingdom of God. If therefore these passages are parallel to that under consideration, which I am ready to allow, then *hungering and thirsting after righteousness* is the same with *coming to Christ, and believing on him* ; therefore is peculiar to the regenerate. This leads me to observe,

2dly, That the *hungering and thirsting* mentioned in these passages, does not intend, at least in all of them, a *hungering and thirsting after righteousness* : but something else. When Christ says, " He that cometh unto me shall *never hunger*, and he that believeth on me shall *never thirst* ; " he does not mean a *hungering and thirsting after righteousness*. He makes no promise here to this *hungering and thirsting*, - which he does to *hungering and thirsting after righteousness* ; but the promise is made to *coming to him, and believing on him* ; and he expressly distinguishes the *hungering and thirsting* he here speaks of from *believing*, &c. and represents it as inconsistent with it. He that believeth on him *shall not* hunger and thirst : the one is not, cannot be, where the other is. Moreover, our Saviour here asserts that they who come to him, &c. shall *never* have any more of that *hunger and thirst* he here speaks of. But will any

christian believe, that no real faint ever hungers and thirsts after righteousness? Have they not a relish and thirst for the waters of life? Surely, they have strong desires after, and their souls thirst for, God, even the living God: And as new born babes they *desire* the sincere milk of the word, that they may grow thereby. By hungering and thirsting then, Christ here means, a being in a miserable, destitute state; or unsatisfied desires, uneasiness and want, without any thing to afford relief; which is sometimes, if not often, meant by hungering and thirsting in scripture. He here promises that they who come to him and drink the water of life, shall never hunger and thirst again in this sense: shall no more be in that destitute, miserable state, in which they were before, which may well be represented by a person famishing with hunger and thirst, without any thing to relieve and satisfy him.

Let us now hear the doctor's argument from these words. "How unreasonable? how unscriptural, says he, were it to suppose, that by those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, our Lord intends only the regenerate; or such as have already eaten and drank of that spiritual bread and water, which he giveth? *Epecially*, when he declareth above, that such persons shall *neither* hunger nor thirst again!"

As all the strength of the argument in these words lies in the supposition, that when our Lord says, he that cometh to him, &c. shall neither hunger nor thirst again, he means hungering and thirsting *after righteousness*, what has been just observed, serves to shew how groundless and absurd

it is. If the doctor's argument is good, it proves that by those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, our Lord intends *only* the unregenerate; and that the regenerate *never do* thus hunger and thirst; so have no true desires after God and holiness. Yea, it proves, according to the doctor's sense of the words, that ~~the~~ regenerate do not desire salvation. By hungering and thirsting after righteousness, is meant, "Strong and ardent desires to attain the righteousness, and so the salvation revealed in the gospel," as the doctor explains it. Therefore, according to him, the regenerate never hunger nor thirst after righteousness, nor earnestly desire salvation; this being peculiar to the unregenerate. According to this, neither David, nor Paul, nor any of the worthies we have on sacred record, were regenerate; for they hungered and thirsted after righteousness; they had strong and ardent desires after righteousness and salvation.

If these things are duely considered, it will, I believe, appear, that this argument of the doctor's, takes all its seeming strength only from a jingle of words, by jumbling several texts together, which have not the same meaning; and which, if they were taken in the doctor's sense of them, would be inconsistent with each other; with the rest of the bible; with common sense, and even with the doctor himself.

And now the reader is to judge, whether in this view of the case, the doctor had any real ground for the following words. "Can any man read this, and yet suppose, that hungering and thirsting after righteousness, in the sense of our Saviour, is *always* subsequent, *never* prior, to coming to him,

or to regeneration? If he can, however good his heart may be, no one has much reason to envy him his head."

Why does the doctor express himself so guardedly? "ALWAYS subsequent, NEVER prior to regeneration. If his argument above is good, and the scriptures referred to any thing to the purpose; it follows, as has been shewn, that hungering and thirsting after righteousness, or a desire of salvation is *never* subsequent, but *always* prior to regeneration: And if this is not true, the argument comes to nothing. If any man may think hungering and thirsting is *ever* consequent, and not *always* prior to regeneration; he may, as consistently with all the doctor has said, think this is *always* subsequent, never prior to regeneration. But if the doctor had truly and fully expressed the genuine consequence of his premises, he would have quite spoiled his argument; and it would have appeared, at first view, that he had proved too much for himself, or any body else.

It appears by the last sentence quoted, that I have sufficiently *endangered my head* to the doctor—However good the doctor's may be in the main, most readers, I imagine, will take leave to think it was not perfectly right in this instance, at least. And I will presume to say in my turn: Can any man read this, and yet think the doctor's argument strong and consistent? If he can, no one, I am sure, has *any* reason to envy him his head.

THE doctor's argument, to prove that when our Saviour promises good things, to them that *ask* for them, he means the asking of the unregenerate, shall be next considered. He having observed, that,

that, " the good things promised, are such as are comprehended in the gift of the Spirit," goes on to say, " The promise of which, in consequence of asking, seeking and knocking, is so far from supposing that the persons who do so, are already regenerate, or that the Spirit is given them prior to their asking ; that it rather, implies the direct contrary: *viz.* that they had not the spirit in the sense here intended. For if they are supposed, at the time of their asking, to have the Spirit of God dwelling in them, to *abide with them for ever*, as all the sons of God by regeneration have, what becomes of the promise ? What are they to have in consequence of asking ? Is it only the continuance of the Spirit, or larger measures of it ? But these are, I think, never called, *giving the spirit*, in the language of scripture : which means the *original* bestowment of it [or him] on such as were destitute of it ; in consequence of which, they are said to be born of the Spirit, or of God." As a man is but *once* born of God, or of the spirit, so the Spirit is, properly speaking, " never *given more than once* : For being once given, he is to *be in, and abide with believers for ever*." (o)

If the following things are attended to, it will be easily seen how little weight there is in this argument.

1. The regeneration is produced by the Spirit of God : yet in affecting this change, he is not given, properly speaking, to abide in them for ever, as a promised, abiding principle of holiness : but

(o) P. 64.

the holy spirit is thus given, after regeneration, in consequence of faith in Jesus Christ, to which the gift of the Spirit is often and always promised. The spirit of God in regenerating men, operates not as a promised gift or agent; but regeneration is effected as an *unpromised* favor. There are no promises to any particular persons, of the gift of the Spirit, in this sense, to produce this change in them, in which they are wholly passive: nor are there any promises in the bible to regeneration itself, or to the regenerate, antecedent to any exercise of holiness, but only to those exercises, which are the fruit and consequence of regeneration. This remark is sufficient to shew the doctor's mistake, in supposing that the spirit of God is given in regeneration, as the spirit of promise, to abide with them for ever; on which mistake the whole force of his argument rests. But this will be more fully confirmed by what follows.

2. Tho' the spirit of God is in a sense given in regeneration, as it is an effect produced by the spirit; yet he is not herein given as he is to the believer, as a promised, abiding principle of holiness. In this latter sense, in which sense alone he is promised, he is given to those who believe, or those who ask him, which are really one and the same thing, as will be more fully considered by and by. Christ promises the spirit to those who come to him, or believe on him. "Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink. He that believeth on me as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. This spake he of the Spirit, which

which they that *believe on him* should receive.”(g) Now I trust the doctor will not deny that men must be regenerated, or born of God, antecedent to their believing on Christ, or in order to this: If he should, the apostle John will confute him; for he says, “ Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God.”(b) If they who believe on Christ are already born of God; then when Christ promises the Spirit to them who believe on him, he means something by the gift of the Spirit which is not given in regeneration, and something more, even that he should be in them for ever as an abiding principle of spiritual life or holiness. Exactly parallel to this, are the words spoken by the same person, long before, “ Turn you at my reproof: behold, I will pour out my spirit unto you.”(i) To turn at wisdom’s reproof, is the same with coming to Christ, or believing on him; and in consequence of this, the spirit is promised to be poured out upon them, as our Saviour promises the Spirit to those who come to him, by the same metaphor, *water*. We may not hence infer that persons are to turn to Christ without the Spirit, or antecedent to regeneration; but that being regenerated by the unpromised influence of the divine Spirit, they turn at wisdom’s reproof, come to Christ, and believe on him, and so ask him for all good things; to which the Spirit is promised, to be in them for ever. We hence see how greatly mistaken the doctor was in supposing in the passage above quoted, that when the scripture speaks of giving the Spirit, it always means, “ the origi-

(g) *John* vii. 37, 38, 39. (b) 1. *John* v. 1. (i) *Prov.* i. 23.

nal bestowment of him, in consequence of which men are said to be born of the Spirit of God." For our Saviour speaks of giving the Spirit to them who believe on him; but believing on him is in consequence of the original bestowment of the Spirit in regeneration: for such, St. John says, are already born of God. Therefore, after men have received the Spirit, so far as is necessary in order to their being born of God, they must believe on Christ, or come to him, and ask him, in order to receive the Spirit in the sense in which he is promised by Christ.

Exactly agreeable to this are the words of St. Paul. "That we might *receive* the promise of the Spirit through faith(*k*)" "In whom also *after that ye believed*, ye were sealed with the holy Spirit of promise."(*l*) Here he speaks of the gift of the Spirit as promised to men, in which he doubtless has reference to the promise of Christ now under consideration, among others. And this, he says, they received *through faith*, and *after they had believed*: therefore *after* they were regenerate. Faith then is the condition of this promise, and not any doings of the unregenerate. Again he says, "And *because ye are sons*, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts."(*m*) He here speaks of the gift or bestowment of the Spirit in consequence of their being the sons of God: and he had just told how they became the sons or children of God: *viz.* that they were "all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus."(*n*) And it is worthy of remark here, that the promise

(*k*) Gal. iii. 14. (*l*) Eph. i. 13. (*m*) Gal. iv. 6. (*n*) Chap. iii. 26.
which

which Christ makes of the spirit to his disciples, to abide with them forever, to which the doctor alludes, is made to those who were already regenerate; and he expressly says, the world, that is, the unregenerate, cannot receive the Spirit in the sense in which he is here promised.^(o) He therefore does not mean what the doctor calls "the original bestowment" of the Spirit. If the doctor had well attended to all this, the paragraph of his, now under consideration, would most probably never have seen the light.

3. Tho' the spirit operates in a sense and degree in regeneration; yet as he does not regenerate men as being given as an abiding principle of life, but this change is produced as an *unpromised* favor, which neither unites them to Christ, nor gives them an interest to any promise in the bible, there appears great propriety in promising the Spirit as an abiding principle of eternal life, which comprehends all good things, to those exercises or acts by which the regenerate actively unite themselves to Christ, and come to him, trust in him, and *ask* in his name for this great benefit. And our being directed to believe on Christ in order to this, and ask for the Spirit in this sense, with a promise that he shall be given, is no argument, that in order to thus believing and asking, we must not first be born of God, therefore the doctor's argument is wholly without foundation. The doctor himself allows that persons must have the influences of the Spirit of God in order to strive, or ask for the Spirit so as to be intitled to the promise.^(p) There-

(o) See John xiv. 16, 17. (p) See P. 21, 40, 73.

fore they have the Spirit in some sense when they ask, and in order to their asking: and therefore, according to him, the promise of the Spirit to them who ask does not imply that persons must not have the Spirit in order to ask. If therefore there is any reason in what he says, which indeed there is not, it is as much against himself, as any body else.

4. It is acknowledged that the Spirit is given *but once* as he is promised by our Saviour. He is given to believers never to be taken away: but this gift of the Spirit men never receive in regeneration, as has been shewn; but in consequence of that faith, that coming to Christ, and asking him, for which regeneration lays the only foundation. And as this gift is promised to believing and asking; so it can be received in no other way. And never is given but in consequence of asking.

5. As this gift is first received in a way of believing and asking, so it is continued, and the Spirit abides in believers by the exercise of faith, or their continuing to ask for the Spirit in a persevering way. Therefore men are not only to ask for the Spirit in order to their first receiving this gift; but are to continue to ask, in order to the Spirit's abiding in them, and perfecting the work he has begun. This direction and promise of our Saviour is therefore applicable to true christians at all times.

The doctor does not expressly deny this; but the whole of what he says is inconsistent with it. If believers having the Spirit dwelling in them, with a promise that he shall abide with them for ever, renders it absurd for them any more to ask
for

for this favor, which comprises all good things: then certainly they must ask *no more*, where once they are born of God, and have received the Spirit. And if, true christians are never to ask for the Spirit, because he is in them, and they have the promise that he shall abide with them for ever; then they are never more to ask for any good thing, as all these are comprized in the gift of the Spirit. Does the doctor mean to represent prayer as inconsistent and absurd in the true christian, who is born of the Spirit of God? It certainly is so, if there is any reason or propriety in what he says.

< If, as the Doctor justly observes, all spiritual blessings and good things are comprehended in the gift of the Spirit: and therefore asking for the spirit is the same with asking for spiritual blessings, or good things in general. And if when the Spirit is once given, as he is to all the regenerate, there is no reason or propriety in asking for the Spirit; upon which position the doctor's argument is wholly grounded: then they who are regenerate have no spiritual good thing to ask for; consequently prayer is no part of their duty: This belongs only to the unregenerate. How contrary to this is the scripture account of the matter! This teaches true christians to pray without ceasing: to pray *always* with all prayer. And this, although they already have the Spirit, and pray by the Spirit. There we find such words as these. " Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings that cannot be uttered." (q) " Praying always with all

(q) Rom. viii. 26.

prayer and supplication *in the Spirit.*" (r) " *Praying in the Holy Ghost.*" (f)

6. On the whole, it appears, that turning at wisdom's reproof, coming to Christ, or believing on him, a willingness to take of the water of life, and asking good things of God, are all one and the same thing, or at least imply each other; and therefore the promise of the Spirit, which is the sum of all good, is made to this. But in order to men's coming up to this condition of the promise, they must, according to scripture, first be born of the Spirit of God. In order really and heartily to ask for good things, there must be a real and hearty willingness to have them, or a desire of them considered as what they are; and indeed, *asking* is nothing but a proper exercise and expression of such willingness and desire. But this is the same with coming to Christ, receiving him, or believing on him: In order to which men must be regenerated, as has been before shewn. They who with their whole hearts reject all the good things the gospel offers, surely do not in any true sense *ask* for them. But this is true of all unregenerate men,

(r) *Eph. vi. 18.* (f) *Jude 20.*

SECTION

SECTION VI.

THE Doctor's ninth and twelfth arguments examined.

WE now come to the *ninth* argument which the doctor has produced in favor of his hypothesis. This is in the following words. "In Ezekiel [chap. 36.] God declares his purpose to do many things for the people of Israel: and, among the rest, to give them a *new heart*, and a *new Spirit*. But he adds afterwards. *I will be enquired of by the house of Israel*, to do it for them. Which unquestionably relates in part to the new heart and new spirit, spoken of before. Upon which we may briefly remark, That eternal life, or salvation, is connected in scripture with the having a *new heart*: That such an heart is the gift of God: That he gives such an heart, not prior to, but in consequence of, being enquired of, or sought to, for it. And consequently, that the enquiring of God, here intended, is the act, not of the regenerate, but the unregenerate; who are awakened to *desire*, and seek after it."

If this passage of scripture is duely attended to, it will appear, I doubt not, that it affords no foundation for what the doctor attempts to argue from it.

There

There are two things promised by God in this chapter, which he would do in behalf of the people of Israel, now under his correction for their sins; both of which depended, not on them, but on God's sovereign determination to do it, not for their sakes, but for his own holy name's sake. This is repeatedly declared in this very passage. (t) God is thro' this whole passage represented, not as waiting for them to do something, in order to his bestowing good things promised to them on this condition; but declares what shall be, in which he himself is the *first mover*, and which he will accomplish in and for them, independent of them.

1. One thing promised is, that he would bring them from the state of captivity and affliction in which they now were in Babylon, and re-settle them in the land of Canaan, in a state of prosperity, and there greatly increase and multiply them.

2. The other thing which God here promises is, that in order to prepare them for this deliverance, and prosperity, that it might be for their good, and the glory of his name, he would take away the hard, obstinate, impenitent, prayerless heart which they now appeared to have, and give them a new, penitent, obedient, praying heart. They had now no heart to repent and humble themselves and seek the Lord; but were stiff-necked, hard-hearted and most rebellious. (u) Instead of humbling themselves under God's corrections, they were disposed to justify themselves; and complained that they were injured: and that God's ways towards them were not just and equal. (x) God

(t) *Ezek. xxxvi. 22, 23.* (u) *See Chap. ii. iii.* (x) *Chap. xviii. 33.*
here

here promises that he will take away this hard rebellious heart, and give them "an heart of flesh;" a penitent heart; a heart to humble themselves, to loath and abhor themselves for their iniquities and abominations : (y) a heart to know their dependence on him, and seek him for that deliverance he had promised to grant. When God says, "I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them." the meaning is, that they should be brought to seek him in a sense of their dependence upon him for that deliverance and enlargement which he had promised, which is mentioned in the words immediately preceding and following these. And this seeking God is so far from being the condition of their obtaining a humble, penitent, obedient heart, that such an heart is necessary in order to this, and is implied in it. A heart to seek God was a new heart, an heart entirely different from, and opposite to, the temper and disposition they then had; and therefore is the very thing promised, when God says, "I will give them an heart of flesh."

This restoration of the people of Israel and return to their own land, after they had been long captivated and oppressed by their enemies, is many times spoken of; and the temper and exercises of mind which they should be brought to in order to this, is often mentioned in scripture, and represented by the following expressions. "If they shall *confess their iniquity*, and the iniquity of their fathers, with their trespass which they have trespassed against me, and that also they have walked

(y) Ezek. xviii. 31.

contrary unto me. If then their *uncircumcised hearts be humbled*, and they then accept the punishment of their iniquity: then will I remember my covenant with Jacob, &c." (z) "But if from thence thou shalt *seek the Lord thy God*, thou shalt find him, if thou seek him *with all thy heart*, and *with all thy soul*.—If thou *turn to the Lord thy God*, and *shalt be obedient unto his voice*," &c. (a) "And it shall come to pass when all these things are come upon thee,—and thou shalt call them to mind among the nations whether the Lord thy God hath driven thee; and shalt *return unto the Lord thy God*, and shalt *obey his voice* according to all that I command thee this day, *with all thine heart*, and *with all thy soul*: that then the Lord thy God will turn thy captivity, &c. (b) "And the Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart,—to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, &c. And thou shalt *return and obey the voice of the Lord*, &c." (c) "Yet if they shall bethink themselves, in the land whether they shall be carried captives, and *repent*, and *make supplication unto thee*, in the land of them that carried them captives, *saying we have sinned*;—and so *return unto thee with all their heart*, and *with all their soul*,—and *pray unto thee*, towards their land:—then hear thou their prayer and their supplication, &c." (d) "For I will set mine eyes upon them for good, and I will bring them again to this land.—And I will give them *an heart to know me*, that I am the Lord, and they shall be my people; and I will be their God: for *they shall return unto me with their whole heart*." (e) "Then

(z) *Levit. xxvi. 40, 41.* (a) *Deut. iv. 29, 30.* (b) *Chap. xxx. 1, 2, 3.* (c) *ver. 6, 8.* (d) *1 Kings viii: 47, 48, 49.* (e) *Jer. xxiv. 6, 7.*

shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you. And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart. And I will be found of you, saith the Lord, and I will turn away your captivity, &c." (g) Behold, I will bring them from the north country, &c. They shall come with weeping, and with supplications will I lead them." (h) "And they that escape of you shall remember me among the nations, whether they shall be carried captives:—and they shall loath themselves for the evils which they have committed in all their abominations. And they shall know that I am the Lord." (i) "And I will give them one heart, and I will put a new Spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart out of your flesh, and will give you an heart of flesh: that they may walk in my statutes, &c." (k) "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you, and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes; and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them. Then shall ye remember your own ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall loath yourselves in your own sight, for your iniquities, and for your abominations. Not for your sakes do I this, saith the Lord God, be it known unto you: be ashamed and confounded for your own ways, O house of Israel. Thus saith the Lord God, I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them, I will increase them with men like a flock, &c." (l)

(g) Jer. xxix. 12, 13, 14. (h) Chap. xxi. 8, 9. (i) Ezek. vi. 9, 10.
(k) Chap. xi. 19, 20. (l) Chap. xxxvi. 26, 27, 31, 32, 37.

From these passages, thus put together and compared, and duely considered with the context, I think the following things will be evident beyond dispute.

I. That to have their *uncircumcised heart humbled*, and *circumcised to love the Lord*, a heart *to know the Lord*, and a *new heart*, is the same thing: and that this implies, or is the only foundation of, *repentance and turning to the Lord, obeying his voice, doing his commandments, and walking in his statutes with their whole heart*: Which also implies, and is really the same with *confessing their iniquity, loathing themselves for their iniquities and abominations; seeking the Lord, and searching for him with all the heart and with all the soul; praying and making supplications to him, and enquiring of him to do these things for them, i. e. to deliver and save them*. The temper and exercises of heart denoted in these several passages and by these different expressions, are, as to substance, one and the same: at least any one of these things here mentioned does imply all the rest; so that where that is found, there the other are as connected with, and implied in it. These scriptures cannot be reconciled, or even understood, on any other supposition. The heart with which they were to make supplication to God, enquire of him and seek him for what they wanted, was not an uncircumcised, stupid, ignorant, hard, impenitent, rebellious, proud heart; but an heart of flesh, a penitent, humble, obedient heart; a heart to confess and forsake their sins, and loath themselves for them.

All these predictions and promises were exemplified and fulfilled in Daniel, Ezra and Nehemiah, and all the pious Jews who were returned from the Babylonish captivity. They had a *new heart*; a heart directly opposite to the prevailing temper and disposition of their fathers, who went into captivity. They enquired of God, sought him with their whole heart, for the salvation they needed; and returned with weeping and supplications, with repentance and confession of their sins, and the sins of their fathers. (m) And it may be of use here to observe, that Nehemiah represents the condition of their finding mercy, not to be a seeking God with a hard, impenitent heart, but a penitent, obedient one, which is the same with a desire to fear God's name. "Remember, I beseech thee, the word that thou commandest thy servant Moses, saying, if ye transgress, I will scatter you abroad among the nations: But *if ye turn unto me, and keep my commandments, and do them, &c.*" O Lord, I beseech thee, let thine ear be attentive to the *prayer of—thy servants, who desire to fear thy name.*" (n)

And as this temporal salvation was promised to seeking God with their whole hearts, and enquiring of him to do it for them; so that *eternal* salvation, of which this was an emblem, is promised to this same condition. "The humble shall see this and be glad: and your heart shall live that *seek God.*" (o) "Let all those that *seek thee*, rejoice, and be glad in thee: and let such as *love thy salvation* say continually, let God be magnified." (p)

(m) See Dan. ix. 1,—9. Ezra, vii. 10, viii. 21,—23, ix. 5,—15: Neh. i & ix. (n) Chap. i. 8, 9, 11. (o) Psal. lxxix. 32. (p) Psal. lxx. 4.

“Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord. Blessed are they that keep his testimonies, and that *seek him with their whole heart.*”(q) “Seek, and ye shall find.”(r) “Whosoever shall *call upon the name of the Lord* shall be saved.”(s) But who are they who seek God with their whole hearts?—Not the proud, impenitent, disobedient and hard hearted; but the *humble*; they who *love the salvation of God*, they who are *undefiled in the way*, who *walk in the law of the Lord*; who have *clean hands* and a pure heart.(t) The Psalmist, says “the *wicked*, thro’ the pride of his countenance, *will not seek after God.*”(u) And St. Paul tells us in a quotation from the psalmist, that there is no man in his natural, unrenewed state, that *seeketh after God.*(x) And who call upon the name of the Lord? Not the blind, rebellious and unbelieving as all the unregenerate are: for how shall they call on him, in whom they *have not believed?*”(y)

2. It is also evident, that this condition of their deliverance and salvation, the whole of it taken together, is itself promised by God, as what he would work in them. God himself promises not only to deliver them out of captivity; but to circumcise their hearts, to give them an heart of flesh, by which they should become a humble penitent people, and turn to him, and seek him with all their heart, as a proper preparative for the outward deliverance he had promised. When God says, in the text under consideration, “I will yet

(q) *Psal. cxix. 1, 2.* (r) *Mattb. vii. 7.* (s) *Rom. x. 13.* (t) *Sic Psal. xxi. 3, 4, 5, 6.* (u) *Psal. xi. 4.* (x) *Rom. iii. 11.* (y) *Rom. x. 14.*

for this be enquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them," it is to be considered as a promise that he will bring them to this, by giving them a humble, praying heart, which they were far from then; which therefore must be a *new heart*. God promises that he will bring them to seek him with their whole hearts, which is expressed thus in words before cited, "they shall come with weeping, and *with supplications* will I lead them." But they could not be brought to this, while their hearts were uncircumcised, and hearts of stone; but in order to this, God must circumcise their hearts to love him, and give them an heart of flesh; and it was impossible to accomplish it any other way. So far is this *seeking God* from being antecedent to a new heart, and required, as what must take place in order to it.

What do they mean who flatter sinners that they may sincerely and heartily, or with their whole hearts seek a *new heart*, as the condition of obtaining it, and that to which a new heart is promised? Are not all the exercises of an impenitent, rebellious heart, impenitent, rebellious exercises? and does not the old heart perfectly hate and oppose a new heart? Does not the flesh lust against the spirit? and are not these contrary the one to the other? What sincerity and heartiness then is there in asking for a new heart with a heart so perfectly opposite to the thing asked for? The doctor says, "It were highly absurd to suppose, that a man must have a new heart, in order to his enquiring of, or seeking God, in such a manner, as to obtain such an heart of him." (z) It may be

(z) P. 59.

replied,

replied, Not more absurd, than to suppose, that a person under the dominion of an hard, impenitent, rebellious heart, does, with such an heart, even with all his heart, desire a humble, broken heart, and truly and sincerely seek for it. For this is as absurd as to suppose that sin and obstinacy itself is reconciled to holiness, and subjection to God's law. There is no such thing supposed in the bible; nor will common sense admit of it, however commonly it has been supposed; and tho' the doctor has done it, not only in the argument under consideration, but through all his performance.

On the whole, does it not appear beyond contradiction, from this view of the case, that *enquiring of God*, in the text under consideration, is the same with what is called by Jeremiah, when speaking of the same thing, *seeking God*, and *searching for him with their WHOLE HEARTS*; and that this is seeking God with a new heart. If so, the doctor has wholly perverted this passage.—I have been the more particular on this text, because it is so strangely mis-understood, not only by the doctor, but by many others.

THE doctor takes his *twelfth* argument from the following words of the apostle Peter. "According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises, that by these you might be made partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." (a)

(a) 2 Peter, i. 3, 4.

By the "things pertaining to life and godliness," the doctor understands, the external privileges of the gospel, among which he reckons "the great and precious promises." The end of which, he says, is, our being made "partakers of the divine nature," which is the same with a new heart. And "escaping the corruptions that are in the world thro' lusts," he takes to be the same with striving to enter in at the strait gate. And he finally observes, "that this divine nature or new heart, is given in a way of promise, or in the fulfilment of the promises." Hence he infers that there are promises of a new heart to the unregenerate, who strive to enter in at the strait gate.

If by "all things pertaining to life and godliness" are meant the gifts, qualifications and peculiar advantages bestowed by the divine power, even that mighty power, which is exercised towards them who believe, (b) bestowed, I say, on true christians, to whom the apostle is speaking, who have obtained *precious faith*, thro' or in the righteousness of God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ. (c) If by, "exceeding great and precious promises" are meant the promises of all good things, made to God's people, but more especially of the heavenly inheritance. And by "partaking of the divine nature is meant this perfect purity and holiness for which all true christians are candidates; for which they are longing, and to which they shall all be finally brought. And by "escaping the corruption that is in the world through lust, is meant crucifying the flesh with the affections and lusts, puri-

(b) *Eph. i. 19.* (c) *1st. 19.*

fying ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and Spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God, (d) and purifying ourselves as Christ is pure," (e) being encouraged and animated hereto by the great and precious promises made to the people and servants of God, thus to "press towards the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (f) "not being slothful, but followers of them, who through faith and patience *inherit the promises*," (g) I say, if these several phrases are thus understood, the true sense of the whole passage will be found in the following paraphrase.

' I Peter an apostle of Jesus Christ write this epistle to all true believers. My beloved brethren,
 ' as you have entered upon the christian life, so I
 ' earnestly wish you may make great progress, and
 ' that all divine gifts and graces may be multiplied
 ' and abound, in and by an increase in the knowledge of God and the Saviour. This it is most
 ' proper for me to wish for you, and I am especially encouraged to do it, since by the exceeding
 ' greatness of God's power, which has been exercised towards every one that believeth, you have
 ' been raised from the dead and quickened by the
 ' partaking of spiritual life and true holiness, in
 ' the knowledge of him who has hereby effectually called and furnished you to press on to the perfect holiness and glory of his eternal kingdom.

' And has also given you exceeding great and precious promises, that by these you might be
 ' encouraged and animated to perfect holiness in
 ' the fear of the Lord, cleansing yourselves from

(d) 2 Cor. vii. 1. (e) 1 John iii. 3. (f) Phil. iii. 14. (g) Heb.

all filthiness of flesh and spirit, in the denial of
all ungodliness and every worldly lust.'

Very parallel to these words are those of St. Paul.
"Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved,
let us cleanse our selves from all filthiness of the
flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of
God." (b) And several other passages, which
might be mentioned.

The most natural and easy sense of these words,
and the most agreeable to parallel passages of scrip-
ture, being given, there appears to be no foundation
in them for the argument the doctor attempts to find
in them: It is therefore needless particularly to
shew how groundless and forced is the meaning
which he puts upon them.

THE doctor's arguments have been now, I trust,
fairly and fully considered. And it must be left
to those who interest themselves in this question to
judge, whether he has in any measure proved, that
there are any promises in the bible of regenerating
grace or salvation, to the doings of the unregene-
rate. The doctor is very sanguine in the matter,
and concludes that he has produced, "not only
satisfactory and conclusive evidence of it; but a
full blaze of it, so as to take away even the pos-
sibility of doubt, from any person of a tolerable
comprehension of mind, who seriously attends
to it;—unless he is under the influence of some
very unhappy, tho' he does not say, criminal
prejudice." (i) On which side the evidence lies,
where the prejudice is, and how far criminal, let

(b) 2 Cor. vii. 1. (i) P. 70, 71.

the *unprejudiced judge*. That all may be under the better advantage to do this, the following sections are added.

SECTION VII.

A short and plain state of the case.

WHILE we have been attending to the doctor's state of the question, and his arguments to support the tenet he espouses, some things have been said which, it is hoped, will help to set this matter in a true light. However, it may not be improper here to collect the whole of this kind, so as to give a plain short view of the case.

Man is not only by sin plunged into a state of infinite guilt; from which he cannot be delivered, consistent with the law and moral government he is under, unless he is interested in, or united to, the Mediator: but he has also by his apostacy lost the moral image of God, or all true holiness; and consequently is wholly corrupt, and under the dominion of appetites and inclinations directly contrary to God and his law. (k) This is the carnal mind which

(k) Dr. Mayhew allows that men are destitute of all true holiness until they are born again, or have a new heart given them in regeneration. [P. 42.] Yet, [P. 73] he represents the exercises and doings of the unregenerate,

which the scripture says, " is enmity against God; For it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." (1) This corruption or viciousness of heart being so great and universal, the sinner will not repent, or have any right exercises towards God and his law, untill his heart is in some degree renewed and *set right*. In this state the gospel finds man; in which pardon and salvation, through a mediator are freely offered to his acceptance; and all are invited to come to Christ, believe on him and trust in him, for all they want: being assured, that on this condition, Christ, with all his benefits, shall be theirs.

But as the way in which this salvation is given, is in a peculiar manner adapted to do honor to the

unregenerate, as having something of the nature of obedience to God in them; and therefore GOOD; and consequently not wholly displeasing to God. I should be glad to know of the doctor what that obedience is, which falls wholly short of true holiness. If it is obedience to God's law, it is true holiness, if there is any such thing in nature; if it is not obedience to God's law, How, and in what sense is it any obedience at all? He will be pleased also to tell us, what that is in the exercises and doings of the unregenerate, which is of the nature of GOOD, and yet has nothing of the nature of true holiness. The world has yet found out but two sorts of good, viz natural and moral, holiness and happiness. But as the doctor means neither of these by the GOOD that is found with unregenerate men; he would oblige the world, if he would tell what this new discovered GOOD is.

The doctor's representing the doings of wicked men as good, and in some degree pleasing to God, brings to my mind the words of Malachy [chap. ii. 17.] " Ye have wearied the Lord with your words: yet ye say, Wherein have we wearied him? When ye say, Every one that doeth evil, is good in the sight of the Lord, and he delighteth in them." Our Saviour says, " A corrupt tree cannot bring forth good fruit." Very agreeable to this, a noted author well observes, " It is the good tree ONLY, that bringeth forth good fruit; and it is ONLY a good man, out of the good treasure of his heart, that bringeth forth good things. An HOLY PRINCIPLE within, is considered in scripture as prior to good works, the latter being the exertions and operations of the former." Dr. Mayhew's sermons on various subjects, p. 191.

(1, Rom. viii. 7.

law which the sinner has broken, and vindicate the divine character, to which he is a perfect enemy : and as the Saviour himself, in all he has done in the character of a Mediator, has above all others condemned sin, and manifested his love of righteousness and hatred of iniquity : and as the salvation itself which he gives, consists summarily in deliverance from sin, and the exercise and enjoyment of true holiness, the sinner is in a peculiar manner an enemy to the gospel ; to the Mediator, viewed in his true character ; to the way in which he saves sinners ; and to the salvation itself. And he always continues so while an enemy to holiness, and an impenitent : or until his heart is changed, and he comes to a new temper and disposition. This change of the corrupt heart is in scripture spoken of as the work of the Spirit of God, in which sinners are said to be born of the Spirit, to have the stony heart taken away and an heart of flesh, or a new heart given ; to be quickened, or made alive from the dead ; created in Christ Jesus unto good works, &c. It is also called the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the the Holy Ghost.

As men do in their natural state with their whole hearts reject the good things offered in the gospel : and their doing so, is wholly owing to an inexcusable wickedness of heart, God is not obliged, in reason or justice, to remove this voluntary wicked inexcusable opposition and bring them to a willing compliance with his proposals : Neither has he obliged himself to do this for any, by promises to any thing which they shall do, as the condition of it. Therefore whenever, and in whatever instance, God takes away the heart of stone, and gives a

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new heart, he acts as being unobliged, or sovereignly, and bestows an *unpromised* favor; and so "has mercy on whom he will have mercy; and whom he will he hardeneth" *i. e.* leaves under the dominion of a hard, stony heart. But when God gives a new heart in regeneration, a foundation is laid in the mind for a discerning of the truths, of the gospel in their real beauty and excellency, (to which the unregenerate heart, or the mind under the dominion of lust is wholly blind) and for those right exercises, in which faith or christian holiness consists. And all the promises of the gospel are made to these *exercises* of the mind, in which the mind discerns divine truth in some measure as it is, and heartily embraces the gospel, &c. And the first exercise of this kind, intitles the person to all divine promises; to pardon of sin, and eternal life, and to all those divine influences, by which he shall persevere in faith and holiness, untill he shall be perfectly delivered from all sin, and awake compleat in *God's likeness*.

There must therefore be a distinction kept up between regeneration, which is the work of God in giving a new heart, and in which men are perfectly passive; and *active* conversion in which men, being regenerated, turn from sin to God, in the exercise of repentance towards God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ; and in consequence of which they are pardoned and received to favor, and a title to eternal life; and have the gift of the Spirit to dwell with them for ever, as an abiding principle of life and holiness. All this, with every benefit which men receive by Christ, is promised to those who believe, or heartily embrace
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gospel, and not to regeneration : for to this, considered as antecedent to all *action*, and only as the foundation of right exercise, no promise is made. Neither are those influences by which men are regenerated in this sense, meant by giving, or receiving the Spirit, as the Spirit of promise, by which believers, and they only, are sealed to the day of redemption : but men receive the Spirit, in this sense, as a spirit of adoption, by which all God's children are led, by faith, or a hearty receiving Christ with all his benefits. (*m*) They who will not make and understand this distinction, must think and talk in some measure unintelligibly on this point,

This change therefore, called regeneration, by which a new heart is given; as the foundation of all true discerning of the things of God's moral kingdom, and of all right exercises of heart ; this change, I say, " wrought by the Spirit of God immediately and instantaneously, and altogether imperceptibly to the person who is the subject of it ; it being impossible that he should know what God has done for him, but by a consciousness of his own views and exercises, which are the fruit and consequence of the divine operation. These views and exercises of the regenerate, in which they turn from sin to God, or embrace the gospel, are often in scripture spoken of as included in that change which is called a being born again, &c. as all the change which is perceptible, and in which man is active consists in this. And this is sometimes called by divines *active conversion*, to distinguish it

(*m*) See *John* i. 12, *Gal.* iii. 14, 26, *Eph.* i. 13.

from regeneration, or that change in which men are passive.

Men being washed by regeneration, and renewed by the Holy Ghost; the hard rebellious heart being subdued in a degree, and a new and opposite bias, which is by our Saviour called an *honest and good heart*, being given, the light and truth of God's word, enters into the mind, and it discerns the things of the Spirit of God in their reality, beauty, wisdom, glory: and in this view and sense of divine truth, the heart approves of the divine character, comes to Christ for life, or believes on him, and sincerely and heartily asks for the Spirit, or that living water which Christ gives, and which comprehends all good things. And to this hugging and thirsting after righteousness, coming to Christ, believing on him and trusting in him; to *this* asking, knocking, seeking, divine promises are made, even to the first and lowest degree of this kind of exercise. To such the Spirit is given as a fountain; "a well of living water, springing up into everlasting life."⁽ⁿ⁾ And by this actively cleaving to Jesus Christ, in a view of his true character as Mediator and Saviour, and uniting themselves to him, a proper foundation is laid for their being looked upon and treated, as being in him, and in a sense one with him; so that on his account, out of respect to his merit and worthiness, they are pardoned and received to favor; they become the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus, and heirs of eternal life. And as they have thus received Christ Jesus the Lord, so they walk in

(n) John iv. 14.

him;

him ; the life they live is *by faith* on the Son of God ; and consists in cleaving to Christ in all proper ways ; in coming to him, living upon him, asking and receiving all good things from him, as a free gift to the infinitely unworthy.

THE unregenerate Sinner may be in a sort convinced in his judgment and conscience that he has by his sin exposed himself to eternal destruction ; that he can be delivered from this evil, and obtain salvation only by Jesus Christ, by coming to him and believing on him ; and that in order to this he must have a new heart given him by God, &c. And he may have such a sense of his danger and misery, and of the awful consequence of sin, as to fill his mind with great uneasiness and distress. This may, while it continues, deaden him to all carnal gratifications, and make him afraid to indulge himself to any overt acts of known sin ; and lead him to make deliverance from future misery his great concern, and earnestly to seek this in the use of all means ; being all attention to the great concerns of his soul, and a future world. But all this does not alter the reigning temper and disposition of the heart. There may be yet no more true hatred of sin than before, and a reigning enmity against the divine character, and law, and against the gospel ; and the heart may therefore be as far from repentance, and acceptance of offered salvation by Jesus Christ as ever, and really reject and abhor the good things offered in the gospel : and so be far from truly desiring and asking for them. And this is certainly the case with every unregenerate person, whatever concern and exercises he may
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have about the salvation of his soul ; and whatever he may pretend and think of himself. If he thinks better of himself, as thousands do, it is all delusion : And they who go about to strengthen and confirm men in such delusion, are strengthening the cause of the prince of darkness, instead of promoting the interest of Christ, and the salvation of sinners.

I shall therefore think myself doing God service, and that which tends to promote the good of mankind, while I attempt to prove, that there are no promises of regenerating grace or salvation, made to these exercises and doings of the unregenerate in the holy scripture. This is the design of the following section.

S E C T I O N V I I I .

ARGUMENTS to prove that there are no promises of regenerating grace or salvation, in the scripture, to the exercises and doings of unregenerate men,

THAT the doctor's arguments to support the affirmative of the question before us, are by no means satisfactory and conclusive, I have endeavoured to shew. I shall now attempt to prove

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the negative, by suggesting as briefly as I can, some of the most obvious arguments which have occurred to my mind.

I. ARG. THAT there are no promises of regenerating grace made to the exercises and doings of the unregenerate, may be argued from many particular passages in holy scripture.

In scripture men are required to repent and believe, and turn to God on pain of eternal damnation, and are declared to be in a state of condemnation untill they do so. "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." (o) "He that believeth not, is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." (p) "He that believeth not the Son, shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." (q) "He that believeth not shall be damned." (r) If he that believeth not shall be damned, is *now* under condemnation, and has the wrath of God abiding on him, surely he has not at the *same time*, even while he does not believe, a promise of God's favor and eternal life: for to be condemned, and under God's wrath, and to be interested in the promises of God's favor and eternal life at the same time, is a contradiction, and absolutely impossible. But if the promises of the gospel are made to the doings of unregenerate sinners, then they have a title to God's favor, and eternal salvation, antecedent to faith, or while they are unbelievers; and therefore while they are condemned, and under the doom of eternal damnation. They

(o) *Luke* xiii. 3. (p) *John* iii. 18. (q) *v.* 36. (r) *Mark* xvi. 16.

are therefore at the same time, interested in all the divine promises, under God's favor and smiles, and accepted of him to a title to life ; and yet under all the curses written in God's book, in a state of condemnation, and under the wrath of God. We cannot avoid this glaring absurdity and contradiction, without concluding that there are no promises of saving mercy made to sinners, upon any condition short of faith in Jesus Christ ; and therefore may be sure there are no such promises. (f)

AGAIN the first 13 verses in the viii, chap. of the Epistle to the Romans seem not consistent with

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(f) Dr. Mayhew himself asserts, that all unregenerate men are under a sentence of condemnation and death [p. 26.] " As sinful creatures, " says he, we are already exposed to perdition from the avenging justice of God : yea, we are actually under a sentence of condemnation and death, till such time as we are delivered therefrom, by having an interest in the redemption wrought out by Christ. For, it is to them only that are in Christ Jesus, and so in him as to walk, not after the flesh, but after the Spirit, that there is no condemnation." How he will reconcile this with unregenerate persons, who are not, even according to him, in Christ, and do not walk after the spirit, but after the flesh, being interested in promises of God's eternal favor, while such, and on the account of what they have done, I am not able to imagine. He may perhaps attempt it now, tho' he once very justly thought it impossible. This appears from the following words of his: " There are no promises of future glory and happiness made in the scriptures, to impenitent, persevering transgressors. They are all made to those who confess and forsake their sins. The gospel is so far from giving any title to future glory, to the impenitent workers of iniquity, that it expressly condemns them, and cuts them off from it." [He having cited several passages of scripture to prove this, goes on in the following words, which are worthy of special note.] " It is not SURELY POSSIBLE, that the same gospel, which speaks thus to, and of, the wicked and disobedient, condemning them to future woe and punishment, should, at THE SAME TIME, entitle them, by its promises, to life everlasting." Serms. on several subjects, p. 221.

the notion that there are promises of salvation to the unregenerate. It is there said that "to be carnally minded *is death.*"(t) And that they who "live after the flesh, *shall die.*"(u) And they are represented as in a state of condemnation.(x) And here all are represented as *carnally minded*, and being *in the flesh*, and *walking after the flesh*, who have not the Spirit of Christ, and do not walk after the Spirit.(y) But unregenerate persons have not the Spirit of Christ, and do not walk in the Spirit: therefore they are those who are in the flesh, and walk after the flesh.

All unregenerate persons then are, according to this, in a state of condemnation and death, and are in the way to eternal destruction. But this cannot be true if any, while in an unregenerate state, have a title to life, or are interested in the promises of salvation. For he who has a title to life, or is doing that to which the promises of salvation are made, is not in the way to death; but in that which leadeth to life; neither is there any condemnation to him. They who assert that there are promises of God's favor and eternal life, to the exercises and doings of unregenerate men, point out a way for them to walk in, while they are in the flesh, and walk after the flesh, which,

It seems the doctor now believes that there are promises of future glory and happiness made in scripture to impenitent, hard hearted sinners, who do not confess and forsake their sins; and that 'tis very possible that the same gospel which condemns unbelievers to future woe and punishment, does at the same time entitle them, by its promises, to life everlasting; and has wrote a book to prove it. But as there is a real impossibility, and direct contradiction in the case, no wonder his attempt has proved very unsuccessful.

(t) Rom. viii. 6. (u) v. 13. (x) v. 1. (y) v. 4, 9.

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they say, is the way to life; and by walking in which, they shall not die, but live: But St. Paul says, it is the way to death, and by walking in it, they shall die: none being free from condemnation, and in the way to life, but they who have the Spirit of God dwelling in them; do live after the Spirit, do through the Spirit mortify the deeds of the body; are in the spirit, and led by the Spirit; and so are the sons of God. Therefore these men do not agree with, but directly contradict, St. Paul, or rather the Holy Ghost speaking by him.

St. Paul here divides men into two classes and no more: one are the sons of God, who have the Spirit of Christ dwelling in them, who walk after the Spirit, and are led by the Spirit, and through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body. These are free from condemnation and death, and in the sure way to life. In the opposite class are comprehended all others: who being in the flesh, and walking after the flesh, are in a state of condemnation, and in the way which leadeth to eternal destruction. This is exactly agreeable to our Saviour's representation, when he speaks of but *two* ways in which men are going, *viz* the broad way which leadeth to destruction, and the narrow way which leadeth to life. The former is the way of the ungodly, the unholy, the unregenerate, who walk after the flesh, are under the dominion of a *carnal mind* which is enmity against God, and is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. The latter is the way of good men, the way of righteousness, the way of holiness, in which the redeemed, and none but such, do walk, &c. (a)

(a) See a more full representation of this, p. 7, 8.

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MOREOVER, it is observable, that when the apostles went forth to preach the gospel, they never directed men, who applied to them to know what they should do to be saved, to any endeavours and doings short of true repentance, and faith in Jesus Christ, as what would save them: but expressly told them that they must repent and believe on Christ in order to this. (b) And St. Paul speaks of his preaching as consisting summarily in inculcating "repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." (c)

Now, we cannot account for this, on supposition the endeavours and doings of men, which are short of repentance and faith, are the condition of salvation, having the promise of it made to them. For were this the case, they must have directed them to these endeavours and doings, as what they must do in order to be saved, and by doing which they should certainly obtain the salvation they enquired after. And this must have been the drift and sum of their preaching, and not repentance and faith: such as indeed has been the preaching of many since that time. We may therefore be sure the apostles did not believe there were any promises made to doings short of repentance and faith in Christ, but that these were the lowest condition of salvation. This leads me to the

II. ARG. To suppose that there are promises of salvation made to the doings of unregenerate persons, is to make these doings *the condition of salvation*; and not faith or repentance; or indeed

(b) *Acts* ii. 37, 38. *Chap.* xvi. 30, 31. (c) *Chap.* xx. 21.

any thing else which the scripture represents as such.

That to which the promises of life and salvation are made, so that he who has it, or attains to it, has a sure title to salvation, is certainly the condition of salvation; but the exercises and doings of the unregenerate, are this condition, if promises of salvation are made to them. Yea, according to this, the doings of the unregenerate are the condition, and *only* condition of justification. For they who have a title to God's favor and eternal life, are no longer in a state of condemnation, as has been shown; to have a title to God's special, eternal love and favor, and be heir of eternal life, certainly implies every thing that is contained in justification. If then men are not forgiven till they repent of their sins; are justified by faith; and therefore not untill they believe, and heartily embrace the gospel: In short, if one tittle of the new Testament is true, there are no promises of salvation made to the doings of the unregenerate. (d)

III. ARG. THAT there are no promises of salvation made to the exercises and doings of the unregenerate, will be evident if it be considered, that such do with their whole hearts oppose the way of salvation by Christ, and reject the salvation offered

(d) " *WHATSOEVER is necessary according to the terms laid down in the gospel, in order to our having a title to eternal life in the kingdom of heaven, is necessary in order to our being justified in this world. But in order to our having such a title, it is necessary, that we repent of our sins, and obey the gospel: this is therefore necessary in order to justification.* Dr. Mayhew's serm. on justification by faith, p. 219.

by him. That this is true of all the unregenerate has been shewn; (e) so that there is no need of dwelling long upon it here. It has been observed that in *this* men's unregeneracy consists so that to suppose them to be in any degree friendly to the gospel at heart, is to suppose them to be regenerate : or at least that they stand in no need of regeneration, in order to salvation. To suppose the unregenerate are not at heart enemies to the way of salvation by Christ, and that any of the exercises of their hearts about this salvation, are not consistent with enmity against, and opposition to it, is to take away all distinction between the regenerate and the unregenerate : To be sure, it takes away that by which alone they are distinguished in scripture. If any are at a loss about this, let them read their bibles over, with a special view to this point : and then let them tell, what is meant by the unregenerate ; what unregeneracy consists in ; and what regeneration is, on supposition the unregenerate do not with their whole hearts reject Jesus Christ and oppose the way of salvation by him, as being enemies to God and the Saviour. If they are not willing to be at this pains, let them turn to the viii. chap. to the Romans, the passage just now under consideration. There it is said " the carnal mind is enmity against God ;—is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." That by the carnal mind is meant the unregenerate heart, in distinction from those who are spiritually minded, have the Spirit of Christ, and walk after the spirit ; who love God, and are his children, has been just now proved.

And I know not how any one can doubt of this, who will carefully read that chapter. But if the carnal, unregenerate heart, is full of enmity against God and his law, it is equally an enemy to Jesus Christ and the gospel : For the divine character and the holy law of God, are more fully vindicated and honored, and are set in a clearer view, by Jesus Christ in the gospel, than otherwise they could be; and are so interwoven through the whole gospel scheme, that it cannot be understood and approved of, any further than God's law, and his character therein expressed, are seen and loved : and therefore every degree of enmity against God and his law, is, to the same degree, and in a peculiar manner, enmity against Christ and the gospel.

Now that exercises of enmity against Christ, and opposition to the gospel, and the salvation therein revealed and offered ; or those which are consistent with this, are made the condition of a title to and interest in this salvation ; so as that all the promises of the gospel are made to such exercises and acts, I presume none will believe. This seems to be so self-evident, that it is needless to go about to prove it. Nothing therefore seems necessary to decide the point we are upon, but to keep in view the true state of the case, and attend to the real character of the unregenerate, and the nature and quality of all their actions.

It is therefore observable, that men, in arguing that there are promises to the doings of the unregenerate, do always overlook the true character of such, and of their exercises ; yea suppose them to be in a degree friendly to Christ, and the salvation by him. In order to prove that there are promif-

es to the unregenerate, they dress them up in the character which belongs, only to the regenerate; so that by stripping them of this disguise, the boasted arguments vanish into nothing but weakness and absurdity; and the truth arises into view, and becomes clear beyond dispute. (f)

IV. ARG. If salvation is offered to all who heartily desire it, really choose and accept of it, and so truly ask for it: it is offered on terms low enough: as low as any can reasonably desire; yea, on the lowest conceivable or even possible terms. But no unregenerate person comes up to these terms. Therefore salvation is not offered or promised to any doings of the unregenerate.

If a free gift is offered and promised to any one that desires it, and is willing to take it, it cannot be offered on lower or easier terms. If any should say, 'Yes, it may be offered or promised to a person, whether he will have it or no: so that he shall have it, even contrary to his will and choice.' I answer, this is not to offer it on lower and easier terms. It is not to offer it on any terms; neither is it properly any offer or promise at all: it is only a declaration of what shall be; which is, all things considered, contrary to the will and inclination of the person. But indeed there can be no such declaration properly and truly made. A person while unwilling to accept of, and have any gift and enjoyment; and while he rejects it with his whole heart, is not capable of receiving it, or of cordially entertaining the offer of it; and therefore is not a subject capable of such an offer, with a promise

(f) How far this is true of Dr. Mayhew's performance, which has been under consideration, they who have read the foregoing section must judge. that

that it shall be his, even while he undervalues, despises, and refuses to receive it. If it is offered with a promise that it shall be his, as soon as he is heartily willing to accept of it, and upon this condition only; it is offered on the lowest terms that ever any offer was, or can be made. Now, it is granted that the gospel offers salvation to all who will accept of it, or are truly willing to have it. But as no unregenerate person is thus willing to accept of salvation, no such one ever did, or ever will come up to these lowest possible terms, on which salvation is offered and promised.(g) It would be highly absurd and ridiculous to offer that to any one, which is the object of his peculiar aversion and hatred, under the notion of its being his by something he is to do as the condition of it, while he continues thus averse to it: And therefore no such offer was ever seriously and really made. We may therefore be certain God has never done this: but that the lowest terms on which salvation is offered and promised, imply a real choice of this salvation, or a hearty acceptance of it.(h)

If it should here be said, that tho' unregenerate sinners are not willing to accept of salvation which is freely offered; and that this is both their sin and calamity: yet God may offer them *regenerating grace*; and promise to bring them to a willing-

(g) This last proposition has been proved in the third section, and under the last argument.

(h) Dr. Mayhew has supposed and allowed this, thro' the whole course of his arguments, and in all he says upon this subject, as the attentive reader has observed. The only thing he can dispute, is, that the unregenerate do not come up to these terms. When he will prove they do, he will gain his point. For th's therefore the public must wait on him.

ness to accept of salvation, by giving them a new heart, upon terms which they, while unregenerate, may come up to ; and so regeneration, and consequently the whole of salvation, may be connected with this condition, which really is something short of a hearty acceptance of salvation : for this is one thing promised to be given, and is implied in regeneration.

I answer. If we suppose the grace of regeneration or a new heart, which implies a heart to accept of and trust in Christ for salvation, to be offered and promised to the unregenerate, on some condition which they are to come up to and perform, while unregenerate ; yet still this is an offer of that to which their hearts are as much averse, as to salvation itself : they are as far from accepting of such an offer, as they are from accepting of salvation, and reject and despise it as much. The grace of regeneration, or a new heart, is as contrary to the unregenerate heart, as salvation or holiness itself : the unregenerate do oppose and reject this with their whole hearts ; for 'tis supposed their hearts are *now* in direct opposition to the new heart offered ; otherwise they would stand in no need of a *new heart*. If therefore God offers and promises to give them a new heart, on any condition, which consists in their exercises and doings, he makes this offer and promise to exercises and doings which imply, or are consistent with, a real opposition to, and rejection of, the thing offered and promised. The unregenerate heart hates and opposes a *new heart*, just as much as it does the divine character and law, or Jesus Christ and the gospel ; and therefore is no more willing to receive
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the former than the latter, but rejects it with perfect abhorrence. Therefore there is nothing which the unregenerate may be supposed to do, in order to obtain a new heart, which is not itself an act of opposition, or consistent with the most perfect opposition to that which he is supposed to be seeking. For instance: If we should suppose that God offers and promises to give the unregenerate a new heart, on condition they will *ask* him for such a favour: this must mean an asking without any true desire of the thing asked for; yea an asking which is consistent with an opposing and rejecting the favor offered; and therefore really no asking at all for a new heart, but for something else. For so far as the new heart is opposite to the heart of the unregenerate, just so far does the unregenerate heart oppose and hate the new heart, and reject the offer of it; and that constantly, and in all its exercises which have any relation to, and respect the new heart, which is the thing offered.

Thus it appears that there is the same difficulty and absurdity in supposing, that a new heart is offered and promised to the doings of the unregenerate, by which they would become willing to accept of Christ and salvation; as there is in supposing, that eternal life is offered on some condition lower than a real willingness to accept of it.

In a word, if we will not go beyond reason and plain common sense in this matter, we shall conclude, that whatever offer of any favor or free gift God makes to men, he offers it to their free acceptance, and promises that on this condition it shall be their's: and consequently that they can have no title to it, on any condition short of a
heartly

heartly acceptance of it: And that an offer made to a lower or easier condition, cannot be reasonably desired, or even supposed. Therefore God in the gospel makes no offers and promises of salvation, or of any thing connected with it, to the exercises and doings of the unregenerate.

V. ARG. FOR God to offer and promise salvation to those who with their whole hearts hate and reject Jesus Christ in his character of Mediator, would be altogether unbecoming: and really inconsistent with the gospel, and overthrow it. The gospel opens a way of salvation for sinners *through a Mediator*; in which they are pardoned, and received to favor, and a title to everlasting life, purely out of respect to his merits and worthiness; so on his account and in his name. And in this way alone can God pardon the sinner, receive him to favour, and bestow eternal life on him, consistent with his honor and in a way becoming his character, as supreme lawgiver and judge. But to pardon the sinner and receive him to favor, and promise eternal life to him, while he remains an enemy to this Mediator, and opposes and rejects him in this character, would be to act directly contrary to this plan; and really to dishonor the mediator, and set him aside.

Therefore in the gospel sinners are represented as being saved (*i. e.* brought into a state of pardon and acceptance with God, and to a title to eternal life) *by the blood of Christ*; or by his merit and worthiness being imputed to them, or reckoned to their account. Accordingly it is by virtue of their union to him, or being *in him*, that they are delivered

vered from condemnation, justified, &c. In this way God *may be just*, may act a wise and honorable part, so as in no degree to injure his own character as moral governor; even while *he justifies*, pardons and promises salvation to, *him who*, though infinitely unworthy and ill-deserving in himself, *believeth in Jesus* the Mediator: *i. e.* who, in a view of his true character, heartily approves and accepts of him, so as actively to unite himself to him, and be *in him*.⁽ⁱ⁾ He being thus *in Christ*, a proper foundation is laid for his being interested in the Mediator's merits and worthiness; so that he is received to favor and a title to eternal life purely out of respect to Him. Therefore all the promises of God to sinners are said to be *IN HIM, unto the glory of God*.^(k) They would not *all be in Him*, if sinners were interested in them while they continued to hate and reject him, so were *out of him*: consequently would not be *to the glory of God*; as this would be directly contray to the plan of pardoning and receiving sinners to a title to life *in* and by a Mediator.^(l)

I HAVE

(i) See Rom. iii. 26. v. 1, 2. vii. 12 (k) 2 Cor. i. 20.

(l) Dr. Mayhew spends some time to answer an objection against their being any promises to the doings of the unregenerate: *viz* that this supposes God to make promises to these actions, which are not truly holy. [P. 72, &c.] If truly holy actions might be done by men, and yet they continue out of Christ and in opposition to him, as the unregenerate do; it must be confessed, there would be no more reason why divine promises should be made to them, than to actions which are not holy: for all sinners, considered as out of Christ, or not united to him, so as to be interested in his merits, are on a level in this respect, whether holy or unholy; they are infinitely unworthy and ill-deserving, and cannot be received to favor with God, and a title to life, untill they are united to the Mediator, so as to be interested in his merit and worthiness. If the doctor therefore represents this objection in its full strength and im-
portance

I HAVE now produced some of the principal arguments which occurred to me, to prove that there are no promises of salvation made to the doings, of the unregenerate. I am far from concluding that these

port, it must be owned 'tis as feeble as he supposes it to be. But if the obj.ctors mean, that the unregenerate do nothing in that holy manner, which is necessary in order to their hearts being united to Christ the Mediator, so as to be a proper ground of their being accepted in him, the doctor has not in the least degree answered the objection. There may be a sufficient reason why no promises should be made to the exercises of sinners, which have no degree of holiness in them; viz. because such exercises do not unite to Christ, or imply any union of heart to him, but the contrary. It has been observed, that the gospel, or Christ and the way of salvation by him, are so holy, that the unholy heart cannot be pleased with, but must hate and oppose them. Therefore that exercise of heart by which sinners embrace the gospel, or unite themselves to Jesus Christ, by an acceptance of him, must be an holy exercise. In this view, 'tis unreasonable and absurd to suppose, that there are any promises of salvation, made to the unholy doings of sinners; and therefore the objection stands good. But there may be good reason why salvation should be promised to the holy exercises of the regenerate; because, however imperfect they are, they are really an acceptance of Christ, and unite them to him; so that they lay a proper foundation for their being accepted in him, and receiving a title to the heavenly inheritance for his sake: For, as the doctor well expresses it, "It is for Christ's sake, that these promises are made to them." [P. 74.] But it has been shewn, that such promises cannot be made for Christ's sake, to those who hate and reject Jesus Christ: But if promises are made to such, heaven and Christ himself are promised to them, for their own sakes, or rather, for the sake of their own unholy, wicked exercises and doings.

The doctor indeed endeavours to palliate this matter a little [P. 73] What he says is to this effect, the temper and actions of his strivers, are really different from those who are proceeding headlong in their criminal courses; and to say the least, are not so displeasing to God. And their doings may properly be called obedience to God; and therefore have something of the nature of GOOD; and so cannot be wholly displeasing to God. It must therefore render them more suitable objects of his favor and mercy than these are, who do not strive; but commit iniquity with greediness." The doctor seems to be conscious that there must be some GOOD qualification in the sinner in order to render him a suitable object of God's favor and mercy; otherwise he would not take so much pains to find something of this kind in those whom he supposes the objects of this favor. But what does he mean by their

these are the *strongest* and *best*, that might be thought of; or that they are set in the most striking and convincing light possible. Whether they are conclusive or not, let the attentive impartial reader judge.

their being suitable, or more suitable objects of God's favor and mercy, antecedent to their union to Christ, and interest in his worthiness; and considered as in themselves? Does he mean, there is a proper moral suitableness or fitness; some moral excellency which recommends to God's favor, as a reason why they should have mercy rather than others? If this is the case, then they need not the merit of Christ to recommend them to God's favor; for they have upon this supposition, merit enough of their own to answer this end. The doctor repeatedly disclaims the notion of merit; but if this is what he means, he holds to the doctrine of merit to all intents. If any sinner has any moral good or worth, which recommends him to the divine favor, on the account of its acceptableness in God's sight, and on this account is a reason why God shows favor to him rather than to another; he has as real merit, as 'tis possible any creature should have, tho' it may not be to so great a degree. But if by being a suitable, or fit object of God's favor he means any other kind of fitness, he would oblige us by shewing what it is.

SECTION IX.

CONTAINING an answer to two objections.

OBJ. I. **I**T is said that the doctrine contended for in the preceeding section, is greatly to the dishonor of God's *goodness* and even inconsistent with it.

Dr. Mayhew insists upon it, that such a notion is inconsistent with the appearance of any goodness of God to sinners, in the offers made to them

in the gospel: yea, that it is not consistent with justice.^(m) And agreeable to this, he looks on what he has done, in proving that there are promises to the doings of the unregenerate, as “a clear and full vindication, both of the justice and goodness of God.”⁽ⁿ⁾

Ans. This objection seems to have its foundation in a supposition for which there is no ground, and is indeed directly contrary to the truth of the case; *viz.* that if salvation is not offered and promised to the exercises and endeavours of unregenerate men, then it is offered to them on terms impracticable, though they are never so well disposed, and have a good will in the case: and so are not, at all to blame for not coming up to the terms proposed; there being some difficulty in the case which is insurmountable, however good and great their inclination and desire may be to do it. As the objectors seem to view the case, it may be represented by the following comparison. A certain lord, as he was visiting one of his plantations, saw a large building on fire: and when he came to it, he found a number of his servants confined in it. He knowing their situation, calls to them, tells them the dreadful case they are in, and earnestly calls upon them to arise and come to the door with a promise that upon their so doing, he will unlock it, and deliver them. At the same time, both he and they know, that they are fastened down with chains which they have been trying with all their might to deliver themselves from; but find it impossible. They cry to him for help,

^(m) P. 67, 68. ⁽ⁿ⁾ P. 80.

and

and do their utmost, but all in vain : he stands by, and sees them perish in the devouring flames ! Dr. Mayhew, represents the state much in this light in many passages in his sermons, as well as in the following words. “ Is there any real kindness, mercy or goodness, in offering salvation to guilty creatures, and inviting them to accept it, on such terms as are to them *impracticable, tho’ they desire it and strive to this end?*—Impracticable, I mean, with all the helps and advantages that God affords, or will afford to them, though they seek them *in the best manner their circumstances will admit of?* I must confess, I cannot see any goodness herein.” (o)

I am as ready to confess, as the doctor that were the case as is here supposed, there would be no goodness, or propriety in the offers of the gospel. But in truth it is, as it were, infinitely otherwise. There is no difficulty in the sinner’s complying with the offers of the gospel, but what lies in his want of an inclination and true desire to accept the salvation offered; and a strong and obstinate inclination to the contrary. The case really is, as if the above mentioned lord should find his servants in the house consuming by fire, confined by nothing but their own inclination and lust, all engaged in gaming and drinking. He opens the door and calls upon them to escape for their lives, and promises them that if they are willing to come to him, and engage in his service, they shall be safe and happy. But they have such a dislike to his person and service, and are so attached to their gaming, &c. that

(*) P. 67.

they absolutely refuse to comply with the proposal. They had rather run the venture of perishing in the flames: and continue there under the repeated admonitions and calls of their kind lord, untill inevitable destruction comes upon them.

If it should be said, 'That tho' this similitude may fitly represent the case of sinners, who pay no regard to the gospel, but run with greediness in a course of sin; yet the case of convinced sinners, who are concerned about themselves, and earnestly seeking deliverance, is different.' It may be observed, that there is no material difference, so as any way to affect the case under consideration. The sinner, however exercised and concerned he is about himself, and whatever pains he takes to better his case, and obtain deliverance; if still he does not actually accept of salvation; does refuse so to do from the fixed opposition of his heart, to the salvation offered: which opposition of heart is of the same nature and kind, with that of the secure sinner, and is really as voluntary, and every way as inexcusable; and indeed is more apparent, and exercises itself in a stronger manner, than that of the secure sinner; as the former actually resists more light, and conviction of conscience than the latter.

Suppose two criminals, under confinement and sentence of death, for some treasonable practices against their prince. The prince offers to pardon and restore them to his favor, if they will heartily repent, ask his pardon, and submit to his government and laws, as excellent and good. One of them pays no regard to the proposal; but, unconcerned about what he has done, and what is coming

ing upon him, follows his cups, and does not so much as seriously attend to the sad case he is in. The other thinks of the death that is before him with horror, and can neither eat nor sleep in peace : but, on the whole, cannot find in his heart to comply with the offer. The more he thinks of it, the more his heart rises against his prince. He cannot be willing to ask his pardon, nor does he desire to live under his government and laws. He tries every way he can think of to escape death, short of complying with these terms. He sends petitions every day and hour to his prince : hoping to gain his favor upon some other conditions. But the longer he tries, the more he is convinced that he must perish, unless he heartily complies with the proposals made him, and the more clearly he sees and feels the opposition of his heart thereto. Now which of these traitors is, on the whole, the greatest criminal in the sight of the prince ? Does the latter do any thing that tends to recommend him to the prince ? And if after all he dies, in consequence of his refusing to accept of the offered pardon and deliverance, is it any imputation on the goodness of the prince ? or does it appear to be the less goodness in him, because the traitor refused to take the advantage of it ? Let common sense decide the question. And by this, the question before us will be decided.

The terms on which God offers pardon and salvation to sinners, are not " to them impracticable tho' they desire it." They are no more impracticable, and in no other sense, than are the terms on which pardon and safety are offered by the prince to the traitor, in the instance mentioned.

If sinners perish under the gospel, 'tis thro' their own obstinate, continued, voluntary refusal to accept of, or truly *desire* and ask for offered salvation. And shall this refusal of offered mercy; this direct and continued abuse of God's goodness, render it no goodness, and so change the nature of it, as to turn it into cruelty? This is impossible!

If God puts men under advantages to be holy and happy; gives them all proper means and sets before them all proper motives; and they fail of holiness and happiness by a neglect and abuse of these advantages, means and motives. God's goodness is still most perfect, and 'tis not owing to any deficiency in this, that they are not holy and happy. (p) Wisdom itself represents the matter in this light. "Because I have called, and ye refused.—Ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity, &c.—For that they *bated knowledge* and *did not choose* the fear of the Lord. They *would none of my counsel*; they *despised all my re-*

(p) If this needs any testimony besides that of the holy scripture and common sense, Dr. Mayhew's may be produced. "God may, says he, properly be said to be good and merciful to all those, for whose welfare he provides according their respective natures and capacities, however inferior. If these are upon the whole happy, or if those of an higher order might be so, did they not abuse the divine goodness, God is certainly good to them." Sermons on the nature, &c. of the divine goodness, p. 29 And again, p. 67, in order to shew how the punishment of the finally impenitent, is consistent with God's goodness, he says, "God certainly exercises great goodness and mercy towards such sinners in this world; not only in supplying their temporal wants, but in affording them such means of knowledge and eternal happiness as nothing but their own wilful blindness and perverseness can render ineffectual to that end. All are invited and persuaded, in the most gracious and pathetic terms, to accept of eternal life, through him that gave himself a ransom for all."

proof.

proof. Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, &c."

THE doctor seems to think he has done much to set the wonderful goodness and mercy of God in a clear and striking light, by proving that there are promises to the unregenerate. He therefore makes the following, which he calls an *important* inference. "We see from hence the wonderful
 "goodness and mercy of God; in as much as he
 "has given us the strongest assurance of pardon
 "and eternal life, on such terms as, by his of-
 "fered grace we may all comply with, *if we de-*
 "*sire to do it.*"(q) With the doctor's good leave I will say, that the goodness and mercy of God appears equally wonderful, on supposition there are no promises made to the doings of the unregenerate. For even on this supposition, "he has given us the strongest assurances of pardon and eternal life, on such terms as we may comply with if we really desire it. I have therefore as good a right to this inference from my doctrine, as the doctor has from his. Yea I presume to say, *a much better.* In this sentence the doctor supposes that the terms on which pardon and salvation are offered are so difficult, that a real desire to comply with them, does not get over the difficulty: but there is yet need of God's "offered grace," to assist and help over that which is otherways insuperable, by the best desire, and the utmost good will in the matter. Whereas, according to the doctrine he opposes, *a real desire to comply*, is the compliance

itself; and is the condition on which pardon and salvation are offered: there being no difficulty in coming up to the terms, but what there is in having a real desire and hearty good will, or a being truly willing to accept of pardon and salvation. He who comes to this, has no need of any "offered grace" to help him to comply with the terms of salvation, as the doctor supposes; but has *already* complied, and has pardon and salvation insured to him. If the doctor's scheme then, shews the "wonderful goodness and mercy of God," that which he opposes does so, much more abundantly.

But what does the doctor mean by his "offered grace," to help those to comply with the terms of salvation, who "really desire to do it?" If there is a *real desire to comply*, the heart is *really* gained, and there is a real compliance of heart or will, and what more there is required as the condition of pardon and salvation, in which the heart or will has no concern; and so is not the compliance of the heart, but of something else; in order to which compliance we stand in need of God's "offered grace," even when the heart has really complied; I say, what this is; and how God's "offered grace" helps to it, the doctor has not told, and I am not able to conceive. Untill the doctor shall explain this matter, I shall conclude, that there is no "offered grace" to enable men to comply with the terms of salvation, whose hearts do already really comply, and yet can't comply, untill by this "offered grace" they come up to a compliance in which the heart is not concerned, it being something more than, and different from a hearty compliance

pliance. I believe, that no compliance with the terms of salvation is required but an *heartly compliance*; and if men are by God's grace assisted to such a compliance, they have all the assistance they want in the case, in order to obtain pardon; and therefore that God does not offer any other assistance, in order to a compliance.

But let us attend a minute longer to this extraordinary passage of the doctor's. He says, The wonderful goodness and mercy of God appears, "in as much as he has given us the strongest assurances of pardon and eternal life, on such terms as, by his offered grace, we may all comply with, **IF WE REALLY DESIRE TO DO IT.**" But what if we don't really desire to do it? Will this in the least fully the goodness of God in making the offer on such low terms? The doctor supposes, in his very putting the case, it will not. What then if none of mankind will *really desire* to comply; or in other words, really and heartily comply with the terms on which pardon and salvation are offered, untill they are regenerated, and have a new heart given them?—Is not the goodness of God to be vindicated, and does it not appear to be wonderful, in offering pardon and eternal life to every one who is heartily willing and desirous to have them, however far mankind may be from a heart to comply with this condition?

Dr. Mayhew himself, is as clear and full in this, as any one can be: as appears not only from passages already quoted, (r) but the following words of his, in the sermons under consideration. "He

(r) P. 102 marg.

“ [God] has provided and revealed a way of Sal-
 vation, for sinful, guilty and lost creatures,
 thro’ the mediation, the sufferings and death of
 his own dear son; and faith, *Whosoever will,*
let him come, &c. God exerciseth patience and
 forbearance towards his sinful creatures; there-
 by giving them time and opportunity for repen-
 tance, and working out their salvation. Now,
if you should neglect this method of deliverance
from condemnation, and think everlasting life not
 worth your striving after; you will not only
 remain under the guilt of your other sins, but
 will be justly chargeable also with *despising the*
goodness of God: even the riches of his goodness,
forbearance and long-suffering.” (f)

If the language of the gospel to sinners is, *Who-*
soever WILL, let him come, &c. “ And all are in-
 vited and perswaded, in the most *gracious* and pa-
 thetic terms to *accept of eternal life,*” and sinners
 refusal to comply with these offers, and slighting
 them, is a “ *despising the goodness of God, even*
the riches of his goodness” exercised and manifest-
 ed herein; then unregenerate sinners have these of-
 fers, and God is herein *good* to them: and their
 refusal to comply, is a *despising the riches of his*
goodness. Is it not strange, that the doctor should
 express himself so clearly and fully on this head,
 from time to time, and so perfectly agreeable to
 the doctrine he opposes, and yet so confuse and
 bewilder himself, and his readers, as in the pas-
 sage just now considered, and in many others? Or,
 are *we* the only persons confused and bewildered?
 “ Let the unbiaſſed judge.”

OBJ. II. It is objected, that if there are no promises of success to the endeavours and doings of the unregenerate, in seeking the salvation of their souls ;(t) then there is little or no encouragement to sinners to take pains in this matter ; in attending on the means of grace : but it tends greatly to discourage, and lead them to neglect all means and endeavours for their own salvation, if not to indulge themselves in all manner of licentiousness and known sin.

Dr. Mayhew indeed allows, that upon supposition there is no certain connection between the endeavours and strivings of the unregenerate, and salvation ; yet they are obliged in all reason to strive, and do their best. He observes that men will think it worth while to take the utmost pains in the concerns of a worldly nature, when there is an uncertainty with respect to the success of their endeavours : but that the reason and motive to strive

(t) THE reader is desired to observe, and bear in mind, that when the unregenerate sinner is spoken of as seeking salvation, using means and endeavours in order thereto, or even hoping for it, expressions of their kind are to be understood in a sense consistent with his really at heart opposing, hating and rejecting the salvation which the gospel offers. This is not properly the object of his desires and hopes ; and therefore not what he seeks after, and endeavours to obtain. He does not heartily ask for, or desire, the pardon which the gospel offers ; nor that deliverance from sin, and that holiness and happiness, in which the salvation revealed in the gospel consists : so cannot be truly said to endeavour after or hope for this. But the object of his desires, hopes and endeavours, is something else ; even that deliverance from misery or natural evil, and that happiness or natural good, which are naturally and even necessarily the objects of men's desires from an aversion to misery, and love of happiness, which is essential to a moral agent ; and is consistent with the greatest love to sin, and most perfect opposition of heart to that holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.—These expressions are used in compliance with the common way of speaking in this matter, and not because it is the language of scripture.

for

for salvation are unspeakably greater, though there be an equal uncertainty of obtaining. (u) However, he insists upon it, that if unregenerate persons are told that there is no connection between any of their endeavorurs, and obtaining eternal life, this has a direct and manifest tendency to dishearten them and damp their endeavours: and must needs prove a great discouragement to them. (x)

ANS. WHETHER there is any just ground for this objection, the reader must judge, when he has attended to the following particulars.

I. IT does not appear from fact and experience, that what is supposed and asserted in the objection, is true; but the contrary. There can be no instances produced of persons who have been engaged in a diligent attendance on the means of grace and salvation; and have been discouraged and left off from this consideration, that there was no certain connection between what they did, and their salvation. Persons who appear to be in any good degree in earnest in this matter, are not wont to be discouraged in the least by this doctrine. They who profess to neglect the concerns of their souls because there is no promise to the pains they should take, would not be persuaded to be in earnest, by all the promises that can be imagined; and this appears not to be the true reason of their sitting still, or going on in a way of allowed sin.

And if it be inquired, Who are generally the most in earnest in the use of means? It will doubtless be found, that they are those who believe there are no promises made to the doings of the unregenerate: while they who imbrace the contrary notion, are generally in a great degree careless and negligent; either wholly putting off the concerns of their eternal interest for the present, or contenting themselves with that which is very consistent with great slothfulness in religion, the prevalence of a worldly spirit, and a greedy pursuit of the things of time and sense. To be sure, it does not appear that a belief that the endeavours of the unregenerate are connected with salvation has any such influence on persons to excite and encourage them earnestly to attend on the means of grace and salvation, as that they who believe this to be true, evidently distinguish themselves from others in their endeavours. And where this doctrine is preached up most strenuously and constantly, it does not appear to have any sensible effect, to rouse and engage sinners to zeal and earnestness in this matter. Such congregations don't appear to be more engaged and painful in the things of religion than others, where the contrary doctrine is preached. But if there is any visible difference in this respect, it is directly the reverse of this. And wherever there have been the most remarkable visible instances of sinners being awakened to a suitable concern about their souls, and a great and constant engagedness in attending on means, it has been under the preaching, which is in the whole tenor of it inconsistent with the notion of there being promises made to the doings of
unregenerate

unregenerate sinners : and all their concern and earnest endeavours have taken place, and continue, under a firm belief of the contrary doctrine.

Now, if it appears from fact and experience, that the doctrine which asserts that there are no promises to the doings of the unregenerate, is not matter of discouragement to any in constantly and earnestly attending on means ; and that the opposite doctrine does not influence, to stir men up and put them forward in taking pains in this matter ; but rather has a contrary influence : have we not reason to conclude, that the objection is groundless, however well supported by good reason, the objector may think it to be ?

It appears from fact, that sinners under the gospel more commonly neglect the proper means of grace and salvation, live in security and sloth, and so finally miscarry, from presumption, than from despair ; or for want of greater encouragement and hope. And when they do despair, so as in any degree to discourage them, and prevent their engaged, resolute, painful endeavours, this is never grounded on their supposing that there are no promises to their doings ; but upon some delusion. What secure sinners under the gospel who are neglecting the means of salvation, want, in order to their being engaged in this matter, is to have their *fears* excited, and not their hope. Their hope is generally high enough, and too high in all reason ; and is therefore presumption. They stand in need of having their fears excited, by a sight of the dangerous and awful state they are in. And when they have any degree of a just sense of this, they will still have all the hope that is consistent with

a just fear and concern about themselves ; even on supposition there are no promises made to their endeavours. They therefore who make this objection, seem not only to have overlooked matter of fact, but not to attend to human nature, in its natural operations in a state of unregeneracy : and therefore attempt to argue, not only against all experience : but in in direct opposition to reason and the nature of things.

But I proceed to observe,

2dly. THE doctrine that the doings of the unregenerate are connected with salvation, as it is preached up by those who hold it, is so far from containing in it more encouragement to them than the opposite doctrine, that it tends greatly to *discourage* sinners, who are in any good measure acquainted with themselves, and even to throw them into despair.

According to this doctrine, a sinner must distinguish himself from others by his doings, as the proper and only ground of his obtaining mercy. And in order to this, his exercises and endeavours must be in some sense obedience to God, so in some degree *good* and acceptable, or at least not wholly unpleasing to God : so that by this he shall become a more suitable object of mercy, and recommended himself to God's favor. And in order to this, the sinner must really, heartily and earnestly desire salvation, even the salvation which the gospel offers : and must strive for it with the utmost earnestness, without intermission ; must begin

begin in season ;(y) and persevere in it to the end of life.(z) And he who does not do all this, is so far from being in the way to salvation, that he will certainly be lost : and therefore can have no reasonable hope of mercy.

Now,

(y) Dr. Mayhew tells his hearers that they may neglect striving for salvation till it shall be too late ever to obtain, even tho' life should be continued. P. 79. " Do not, I beseech you delay : for human life is precarious ; and altho' your own should be prolonged, yet if you go on to provoke God by your sins, he may perhaps give you over to a rebellious mind ; so that you will only live to fill up the measure of your sins. To day then if you will hear his voice !" According to this, no one sinner, who has lived any time in the world, can be sure it is not too late for him ; yea all such have reason to fear it is so. And that especially if they find their hearts to be yet hard ; which every unregenerate sinner does, if he has any true acquaintance with it.

(z) ACCORDING to Dr. Mayhew no striving is successful, or connected with salvation, but that in which men persevere in to the end of life. [P. 20.] He says, " The striving here enjoined, must be supposed to intend striving with perseverance ; not for a month, a year, or any definite given time ; but as long as it shall please God to continue us in the world."

Upon this it may be observed, That if any are regenerated before they die, or in this life, God does not grant them this favor, and give them a new heart, in fulfilment of any promise to their doings or strivings, or because there is any connection between their strivings and this gift of a new heart. For if no striving entitles to any promise, but that which continues to the end of life, even to the last breath, then if a new heart and an interest in Christ is given before the end of life, it is given not as a promised mercy ; and therefore not out of respect to any end, avails of the sinner, or because they have any connection with it. Therefore they who are regenerated, and become true christians in this life, do not obtain it by their striving, as having any connection with it ; but they become so by the unpromised sovereign mercy of God. If therefore all who are saved are regenerated, or obtain a new heart, and become real, true christians in this life, then they are all brought into a state of salvation, have a sure title to life, and are interested in all the promises of the gospel, not by virtue of their unregenerate strivings, but before they obtain any title to God's favor by these ; because 'tis before they have persevered therein to the end of life.

The doctor's promises to the doings of the unregenerate, and their certain connection with salvation, do at length then turn out to be promises that are never fulfilled, or rather no promises at all ; and a connection which is of no avail ; but is consistent with their being eternally lost.

For

Now, it is easy to shew, that such a representation of the case, tends to discourage the sinner who has any degree of just views of himself, and to land him in despair. The sinner who is brought to any true sight of himself, and belief and sense of eternal things, finds he has an exceeding hard heart, a stony heart; as this is never removed till men are regenerated. He finds that he is in no measure affected with the things, of God and re-

For notwithstanding these promises and this connection, they must go out of the world unregenerate, or in their sins; because they are not entitled to the promises, and the connection does not take place, while they are in this life; as the condition is not fulfilled till the last breath. And if they go out of the world unregenerate, they must be damned, unless they are regenerated, and become true christians in the other world, or after death.

Therefore if any hope to obtain a new heart, and become real christians in this life, they can according to the doctor's plan have no encouragement to strive under the notion of doing that with which such a favor is connected; but must seek it as an unpromised, sovereign mercy. And they only can be encouraged by the doctor's promises, who are willing to wait for a new heart till after they are dead; that is, till it is eternally too late to obtain it, according to the divine constitution.

The doctor having observed that all persons tho' unregenerate, who desire salvation and strive in order thereto, shall be saved, unless they cease thus to desire and strive, adds the following words [P. 56. 57] "Not to be sure, without being born of God; but they shall be renewed in the spirit of their minds, and consequently enter into life." If they are born of God in this life, or while "It shall please God to continue them in this world," they receive this favor before they have fulfilled the condition of it, and therefore not as what they have a title to by promise; for they have not yet fulfilled the condition, which is perseverance in striving to the end of life. If they shall be born of God, and renewed in the spirit of their minds after they are gone out of this world, and so out of the body, this is a new doctrine which has hitherto been thought contrary to scripture. In one word,

The doctor supposes that all who have a new heart given them, receive it as a favor, promised to their seeking and striving. But in order to their being entitled to this promise, they must seek and strive as long as they are in the world. Therefore, according to him, none are regenerated, and made new creatures in this world; but this work is in all cases put off till after men are dead: So there never was a regenerate person or real christian in this life.

ligion, as it is reasonable he should be: and takes pains and strives in no degree answerable to the importance of the matter. He will therefore naturally look upon himself, not to be an earnest striver for salvation; but rather a stupid, hardened creature, who though he finds himself more concerned about his soul than some others appear to be; and constantly attends on the means of grace, yet cannot view himself as having begun to strive in earnest; and will therefore naturally be afraid, it is too late for him. And in this case, calling upon him earnestly and perseveringly to strive for salvation as the only condition on which he may hope to be saved, will tend to drive him to despair; for the more concerned he is, the more deficiencies he sees in his endeavours, and the *less* they appear to him; so that he will naturally conclude, he never shall be one of those *strivers*. He also finds that he has no real true desires of the salvation which is offered in the gospel; but is wholly without all good desires and inclinations, or any thing which should be acceptable or pleasing to God; and that there is no foundation in him for this, until his heart is changed. He will therefore despair of ever attaining to this in an unregenerate state: and consequently, if he is made to believe that none can obtain a new heart but those who have these good desires &c. he will of course despair of ever obtaining it. In a word, he sees that he never has, and never shall do any good thing, by which he should distinguish himself from others, but naturally looks upon himself one of the greatest sinners; as his own sins are more in his view, and more attended to by him than those of others. He therefore
despairs

despairs of thus distinguishing himself from others; of doing or obtaining any thing which should recommend him to God's favour, by becoming better or less sinful than others. So the doctrine that teaches him, he must thus distinguish himself or perish, will be so far from comforting and encouraging him, that it tends only to discourage him: it will be like singing songs to a heavy heart; and if believed, will certainly deprive him of all hope. The only doctrine that can give support and hope to such a sinner, and encourage him to attend on means is, *that God has mercy on whom he will have mercy*; and therefore waits not to have sinners distinguish, and recommend themselves to him as more suitable objects of his mercy than others, before he will grant them mercy: but in shewing mercy acts as being infinitely above all obligations to any, and as having no regard to worthiness, or less unworthiness, as what recommends one to his favor, rather than another. This being the case, the greatest sinner; he who looks on himself the farthest from righteousness of any, and himself to be the most guilty and unworthy, may hope in the use of means: and this is his only support.

If a person is but in a small degree concerned about his own salvation, and is in no measure convinced how sinful and depraved his heart is; and how entirely destitute of all good; he may be flattered and encouraged, under the notion of doing something by which he shall distinguish himself, so as to become a *more suitable* object of mercy than others, and which shall intitle him to God's favor. But to what is he encouraged?—Why, to think more highly of himself and his doings than

there is any reason for ; and to go on in a dull lazy way ; while he flatters himself he is sufficiently in earnest, and is doing something very great and good. This is to flatter him to his own ruin ; to keep him easy and secure in a great degree, or to quash any beginning of genuine conviction and concern, and promote that pride and self confidence, which is inconsistent with the sinners attending on means with any good degree of solicitude and earnestness ; and must be slain, in order to his coming to good.

If these things are so ; I think, it will follow.

3dly. **THAT** though there are no promises made to the endeavours and doings of the unregenerate ; yet sinners have all proper encouragement to a diligent use of means. Yea all that the nature of the case will admit of.

If the doctrine, that there are promises to the doings of the unregenerate, does not in fact, or according to the reason of things, tend to encourage and excite sinners to a proper and diligent use of means ; but really has directly the contrary tendency : then the opposite doctrine affords all proper and possible encouragement thereto, and is the only plan on which sinners may be addressed, considering their state and disposition, so as to excite them earnestly to use means with all proper degrees of encouragement and hope : and so as shall tend to answer the proper end of means.

But what is said in the next section may serve further to clear up and confirm this.

SECTION X.

OF the end and design of means; and the true ground of encouragement for men to be in the diligent use of them, in order to their salvation.

IT may still remain a doubt with some, whether there is really any ground of encouragement for men, especially the unregenerate, to use means to obtain salvation: Or, If there be any, what it is. And as this is an important point, and a careful attention to it may serve to throw some further light upon this subject, and yet more fully obviate the objection last considered, the reader is invited to an attentive and candid perusal of what may be said in answer to the following questions.

QUEST. I. WHAT are the means of grace and salvation; and what it meant by using these means?

QUEST. II. WHY are means to be used, and what end does this answer? And what motive and encouragement is there to this?

QUEST. III. WHAT obligations are men under to use means?

QUEST.

QUEST. I. What are the means of grace and salvation ; and what is meant by using these means ?

ANS. **THE** means of grace and salvation may be considered as including every thing which is adapted and tends to communicate light and truth, respecting the things of a moral nature, to the mind of man ; or to lead his mind to attend to truth, and to excite those ideas which are necessary or proper, in order to right exercises.

The grand medium of grace and salvation, and strictly speaking, the sole medium, is **TRUTH**. It is in the view of this that the mind exercises itself properly, and has true enjoyment. This is the food and life of the mind : Was there no truth, there could be no virtue, or real happiness. As sin and misery consist summarily in the darkness of the mind, and its alienation from, and opposition to light and truth ; so all true holiness, and proper mental enjoyment, consists in those exercises which are implied and involved in a proper view and sense of truth ; the truth, I mean, which relates to God's moral government and kingdom.

But then, all those things, those institutions and exercises, which tend to instruct mankind in the knowledge of truth ; to excite the attention ; to convey truth to the mind, and hold it up in its view : all these, I say, are in a more remote sense the means of grace and salvation. Such are all those things, those circumstances and events in the natural and moral world, which are adapted to instruct mankind. Such, in a special manner is divine revelation ; and all those institutions and appointments therein, to be attended on by men. Such

Such are reading the bible, public and private instructions, religious conversation, serious meditation on divine things, &c. and particularly PRAYER, which is the most solemn way of meditating on divine truth, as it is done as in the presence of God, and in a solemn address to him, and has a special and peculiar tendency to awaken, instruct and affect the mind.

Using these means intends two things, *viz.*

1. Taking methods with men to set truth before them and instruct them, and awaken their attention. Thus God is using means with men in his providence, which is every way calculated to give instruction to a sinful world. But more especially by giving the revelation which is contained in the bible; and ordering it to be published and preached to the world. And according to divine institution, men are using means with others for their salvation, by public and private instructions, &c.

2. Persons themselves attending on these means. This is supposed in the use of means, just mentioned: for if there were none to attend on means, there would be no such thing as using means with any, for their instruction. For the end of instruction cannot be answered, where there is no attention to the instruction given: so no pains taken to get instruction. He who cannot have the attention of those, with whom he attempts to use means, fails of answering the proper end of means entirely: and what he does is as much in vain, as to any benefit to the persons with whom he is concerned, as if they were stocks or stones. So that
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God's using means with men for their instruction and salvation, and directing men to use means with others, supposes the propriety and importance of attending on these means. There would have been no wisdom or propriety in making a revelation, if there were none to attend to it, and use all proper means to understand it, and get the instruction there given. To what purpose would it be to preach a sermon, or write a book in order to instruct men, if none were to hear or read? And what reason and propriety would there be in it? The propriety and reasonableness of taking any pains or method to instruct men, or using any means with them to this end, supposes it proper and reasonable, that they should give all that attention, and take all those pains, which are necessary in order to be under the best advantage to get the instruction given. Now this is the sum of what is meant by being in the use of means. (a) To use or attend the means of grace, is to make use of all the means of instruction in the things that relate to God's moral kingdom; to go into that conduct and practice, and do all those things, which tend to lead us into the knowledge of the truths, of divine revelation, and to keep up the attention of

(a) *THEY who insist upon it that there is no reason why men should be in the use of any means for their instruction and salvation, and yet are using means with others for their instruction, by conversation, preaching or writing, seem to be guilty of an inconsistency. For if it is unreasonable to use any means for instruction, 'tis unreasonable to attend to what they write or speak in order to this; consequently it is unreasonable for them to write or speak. If the instruction they give is worthy to be attended to; then the bible is worthy to be attended to, and it is reasonable and proper to take all possible pains to understand it. And this implies the constant and diligent use of all means of grace and salvation.*

the mind to them : and carefully to avoid whatsoever has a contrary tendency.

QUEST. II. WHY are means to be used, and what end does this answer ? Or of what advantage is it to use means ? What motive and encouragement is there to this ?

It has been observed that the end of using or attending on the means of grace is instruction : either to lead the mind to the knowledge of that truth which it was before ignorant of, or to renew the attention to truth already known, and fix the mind upon it. The question now is, What end this instruction answers ; Of what advantage is it to have the truth set before the mind ; and to have the attention of the mind fixed upon it ?

ANS. THE benefit, advantage and importance of this to men, is just as great as that of an external, divine revelation. For divine revelation is of service to men no further than it is attended to and understood. The world is as well without it, as with it, if no instruction is given ; but this instruction comes only by attending to the things revealed, in the use of means. If therefore the revelation which God has made in the bible ; is adapted to be of any benefit to mankind, with respect to their eternal salvation ; it is of equal benefit to mankind to attend to this revelation, in the diligent use of all proper means ; that hereby they may get and retain the instruction given therein : for without this it will certainly be in vain to them. A revelation not understood, is of no more advantage than no revelation at all. There-

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fore means are to be used in order to obtain the knowledge of the truths contained in the bible, and to fix and impress them on the mind.

In order to the salvation of men, it is absolutely necessary that they should have the ideas and knowledge of those things which relate to this salvation, and in which it consists. He who has no idea in his mind of any thing, is not capable of any exercise of heart, or of any mental enjoyment. No man is capable of any exercise about that of which he has no idea or knowledge. It is impossible that a man should repent, and believe the gospel, so long as he has no knowledge of those truths, in the view of which, repentance and faith are exercised. Therefore if repentance and faith in Christ are necessary in order to salvation, a knowledge of those things contained in divine revelation, without which there can be no such exercise, is equally necessary. But this knowledge can be obtained only in the use of means.

There are but two possible ways in which the knowledge of the truths, which are necessary to be known in order to salvation, can be obtained, viz. by *immediate* revelation, or inspiration; or by an external mediate one, or by means. The latter is the way which God has taken to set these truths before the mind. Therefore the knowledge of them is not to be obtained in any way but in the use of means. (b)

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(b) If the thief on the cross, and Saul the persecutor should be thought by any to be converted and saved without attending on means; they are desired to consider, that the former was surrounded with means of instruction; and it is apparent that he was all attention. And what was this but to attend on means? And the same is true of the latter. His immediate

In proportion therefore as men feel the importance and worth of salvation, will they be engaged in the diligent attendance on the means of grace, as necessary in order thereto, and so the only way in which they may hope to obtain it.

It is to be observed that I am now speaking of that knowledge which the mind is capable of, independent of any degree of right taste or disposition of the heart, or which the mind may have without discerning and relishing the beauty of divine things: And is what is commonly meant by *speculative* or doctrinal knowledge. This knowledge is to be obtained only in the use of means, and is necessary in order to repentance, or any right exercise of heart: tho' no degree of it does imply, or is certainly connected with, any truly virtuous or holy exercise.

The unregenerate are certainly capable of great degrees of this knowledge, which may much impress and affect their minds. (c) They may have a clear view and affecting sense (which is indeed, strictly speaking, something more than mere speculation) of the truths of Christianity, and parti-

mediate instructor was Jesus Christ; and no sinner was ever more attentive than he. And neither of them could have been converted and saved, had they not attended. It may here be observed, that as persons circumstances may be vastly different, and the attention of one may be to a much greater degree than of another, &c. so one may gain that instruction in a short time, which others do not obtain in a much longer, who yet are in the use of means. God may order things so, that a person may get that instruction in a few hours, or minutes, which it takes another years to obtain. Yet the instruction which the former obtains, is no more without attention and the use of means, than that of the latter: and therefore is no argument against the necessity of the use of means, in order to get instruction.

(c) See *Jam. xi. 19.*

cularly of their own state as sinners. They are capable of every thing of this kind, but what depends upon, consists in, or results from a sight and discerning of the true beauty or moral excellency of divine things. This is indeed a kind of knowledge which is peculiar to the regenerate; the foundation of which is laid in their having a *new heart*. The former is necessary in order to the latter, as it is supposed and implied in it: For there can be no discerning of the beauty of those objects, of which the mind has no speculative idea.

If it should be asked, What good all this instruction and knowledge will do the unregenerate, who are under the dominion of a hard and impenitent heart, and will continue so untill a new heart is given in regeneration? If this knowledge will be of no service to them, and really do them no good, and they are yet as far from salvation as ever; then there is no encouragement for them to attend on the means of grace, in order to obtain it, and keep up a view and sense of the truths of christianity in their minds.

I answer, it is certain the unregenerate do not exercise any true virtue in their attendance on the means of grace, however engaged and diligent they are, and whatever pains they, take in this matter. And there is no connection between the instruction or knowledge they obtain hereby, and holiness. Yea, the impenitent sinner, who continues obstinately to reject and oppose the salvation offered in the gospel, does in some respects, yea, on the whole, become, not less, but more vicious and guilty in God's sight,
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the more instruction and knowledge he gets in attendance on the means of grace. The more clearly he sees his own wretched case as a sinner, and the dreadful consequence of dying in his sins; and the clearer conviction he has of his need of a Saviour, and of the truths of the gospel in general; the greater is the crime of his impenitence, and continuing to reject the salvation offered in the gospel. The awakened, convinced sinner, who has taken a great deal of pains in the use of means, and has hereby got a great degree of instruction and knowledge, and yet continues impenitent, is in this respect much more guilty and vile, and a greater criminal in God's sight, than if he had never attained to this conviction and knowledge: For now he is guilty of the abuse of, and opposition to, all this light and knowledge, which he could not be, while he had it not. Yea, his impenitence, and all his sins are so aggravated by the light and conviction he obtains, that whatever particular ways of known sin he has forsaken, and how many soever external duties he attends upon; yet, on the whole, he is undoubtedly a greater sinner, than he was when he lived in security and the neglect of the means of grace. So that the impenitent, unregenerate sinner does not grow better, but rather grows worse, by all the instruction and knowledge he gets in the use of means. And awakened, convinced sinners, with whom most means are used, and who are most attentive to the concerns of their souls, and most in earnest in the use of means, are commonly, if not always, really more guilty and odious in God's sight than they who are secure and at ease in their sins.

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Their greater sinfulness does not indeed consist in their concern about themselves, in a sense of the sad, dangerous state they are in, and in their earnestly desiring deliverance and safety; or in the pains they take in order hereto: but in their continuing to hate God and his law, and to oppose and reject the Saviour, even under all their concern, exercises and endeavours, and with all the light and conviction they have.

Our Saviour represents the light which men have, as that which does in a peculiar manner, and above every thing else, aggravate the sin and condemnation of those who rebel against it. He says, "*This is the condemnation*, that light is come into the world, and men have loved darkness rather than light."^(d) And he says of these to whom he preached; who continued to hate and reject both him and the father, "If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin."^(e) i. e. their sin would have been little or nothing, compared with what it is now. And he speaks of the inhabitants of those cities where most of his mighty works were done, to whom he most frequently preached, and who attended most on his ministry, and yet continued impenitent, as much more guilty, and liable to a more awful condemnation, than if they had never enjoyed these advantages, nor had this light and instruction.^(f)

None will deny, I trust, that a living under the gospel, and enjoying the means of grace, is the occasion of aggravating the sin and condemnation of those who persevere in their opposition to Jesus

(d) *John* iii. 19. (e) *John* xv. 22, 24 (f) *Matth.* xi. 20-24.

Christ. The gospel proves to them a "favor of death unto death." Consequently the more light and conviction men have, the more their attention is awakened to the things of the gospel, and the more means they attend upon, and are used with them, while they continue obstinately to oppose light and truth, and reject the offers of the gospel; the more guilty and vile, and the greater criminals are they in God's sight.

If these things are so, then the sinners who continue impenitent under the greatest convictions of conscience, and the most concern about their souls and salvation, and are consequently taking the most pains, and using unwearied endeavours, are usually the greatest sinners; really more vicious, more guilty and vile than they were, when in a state of security, and lived in a great measure in the neglect of the means of grace. And if they live and die impenitent, their condemnation will be more intolerable, than if they had never had that conviction and knowledge which by their attention to the gospel they have obtained. So that the good the sinner gets, by a constant attendance on the means of grace, while he continues impenitent, is not a becoming in any degree virtuous or holy hereby; or on the whole, less vicious and criminal in God's sight.

However, there is yet a reason why the sinner should diligently attend all means of instruction and knowledge, and sufficient encouragement hereto.

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I. WITHOUT this instruction and knowledge, which is to be obtained by those only who are
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using the proper means of it, the sinner cannot be saved, as has been shewn. This knowledge being absolutely necessary in order to salvation, he who is without it, has a fatal barr in the way of his salvation : And so far as this is obtained; this barr or impediment is removed out of the way : and so he is in a more likely way to be saved than those who are in security and ignorance. For surely he who has obtained one thing which is necessary in order to salvation, is in a more likely way to be saved than he who has not obtained it, nor is in the way of it, all other circumstances being equal, however uncertain it may be that either shall be saved. In order to salvation several things are necessary. He cannot be saved who does not believe ; and he cannot believe who has not heard, and attended to the report of the gospel; so has no right speculative notions about the objects of faith ; and he cannot hear and understand, who has not the advantage of divine revelation. (g) Now he who enjoys divine revelation, and attends to it with the utmost concern and diligence ; so is in the way to get right speculative notions of the objects of faith, and obtain all that is implied in hearing, is more likely to be saved, than he who either does not live under the gospel, or if he does, never attends to it, and uses no proper means to understand it. I say, the former is more likely to be saved, than the latter, because he has more of those things which are necessary in order to this, than the latter. If *hearing*, which is the same with a diligent attendance on the means of grace,

(g) See Rom x. 14, 17.

is necessary in order to faith and salvation ; then they who are concerned about the salvation of their souls, will be proportionably concerned and engaged to *bear*, and get instruction, as the only way in which they may hope to be saved.

It may be also farther observed,

2dly, As that instruction and knowledge which is to be had only by hearing, in a diligent and earnest attendance on the means of grace, is necessary in order to the exercise of repentance and faith, and so in order to salvation ; so the way in which this knowledge is to be obtained, is the only way in which sinners may hope for a new heart, or to obtain regenerating grace.

As he who has no doctrinal acquaintance with the truths contained in God's word, is not in a capacity to exercise any christian grace or virtue, whatever foundation there might be for this in the renovation of his mind by regeneration, no one has reason to expect that his heart will be thus renewed by the spirit of God, while he is in this case. God can doubtless as easily change the heart of the most ignorant, deluded, Mahometan, or heathen, yea the most blind, stupid Hottentot in the world, as that of the most awakened, enlightened sinner under the gospel. But if he should do so by the regenerating influences of his Spirit, there could be no right and proper exercises of *christian* virtue and holiness : because such an one is without any right speculative knowledge of those truths, in the view of which alone christian holiness is exercised. And giving a new heart, or a right taste and temper of mind, would not remove this darkness.

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ness. This only prepares the mind to discern and relish the beauty and sweetness of divine things, when set before it in the use of means; but does not give any new speculative ideas or knowledge. Therefore we have no reason to think God ever does so.

And as the case is in a great degree the same with those under the gospel, who have never attended to it in earnest, they have no reason to expect to become new creatures by God's regenerating influences, so long as they are in this situation. But in order to this, they must first be made to attend to the gospel with that concern and earnestness which is necessary in order to their learning the character of the just God and Saviour, and understand their own state and circumstances as sinners, in a manner in which no careless neglecters of the means of grace ever do: for untill they come to this, grace or the new creature could have no opportunity to exert itself properly, or according to its nature; but must lie dormant and inactive, so answer no good end: therefore not to be expected before, or in any other way. For God does not give life before there is any provision for the support of it, or any materials by which it may subsist, and exert itself according to its own proper nature. Truth may be said to be the food on which the new creature lives, and is absolutely necessary to the least motion of life, or exercise of holiness in the heart. Therefore the mind that has no speculative view and conviction of those truths, in the sight and sense of which especially christian holiness is exercised; but embraces the contrary errors, or is in total ignorance of them, is not furnished or provided

vided for the exercise and support of the divine life : And none have any reason to expect it will be implanted, or a new heart given, while the man is in such a state.

When God created man, he did not first form him while the earth was in its chaotic state, when it was without form, and void and darkness was upon the face of the deep : he did not create him with all his bodily senses and appetites, before there were any objects towards which they might exercise themselves in a manner proper to man's nature, and so as to support and promote animal life, and afford proper enjoyment and happiness. He did not form an eye before there was any light, or objects to be beheld : He did not produce animal life, dependant on food for its constant support and exercise, and an appetite for that food, before any materials were made, to become proper food, suited to the appetite, and to support and nourish life. He did not form man before he had provided any place for his subsisting and exercising himself in a manner proper and suited to his nature. No: He *first* created an external world, a proper dwelling place for man, furnished with materials suited to the senses ; appetites and life of such a creature ; that there might be a foundation and opportunity for proper exercises and enjoyments, as soon as he should be created. And we hesitate not to say, that this was agreeable to wisdom ; and that the contrary would not be so.

So in the new creation, God will not form the new creature where there is no proper provision, where there are no materials for the life and support of the new man, so no opportunity to act,

and to act in a manner proper and suitable to his nature. But proper materials for this new life must first be provided. The mind must be properly stored with speculative ideas of divine things, and the judgment convinced of the truth ; in order to which the man must be all attention to these things in a sense of their high importance to him, as his whole, his eternal interest turns upon them. When things are thus prepared a new heart may be given with propriety and wisdom, as the new creature will now have opportunity to act in a way answerable to its nature, and so to the glory of God.

Christ would not raise Lazarus to life so long as the stone lay on the cave. It was proper the stone which would hinder his coming forth, were he alive, should be first taken away. In this case to neglect to take away the stone would have been an effectual bar in the way of his resurrection ; and the most likely method that could be taken to have him raised from the dead was to take it away. Ignorance of, and inattention to the truths of divine revelation, may be compared to this stone. The only likely way for the sinner to become the subject of a spiritual resurrection, is to have this taken away, by becoming all attention to the things contained in God's word. And the more instruction the sinner has, the more fully and clearly he is convinced of those truths which do most nearly concern him ; and the more constantly and earnestly he attends to divine truth by hearing, reading, meditation, prayer, &c. and the more his mind is impressed and affected with it, as the minds of the unregenerate may be ; the more hope there is in his case ; the more likely it

is that he shall become a new creature, and believe to the saving of his soul.

This view of the matter serves to shew what is the advantage of knowledge to the unregenerate sinner, even the knowledge which no openly vicious, or careless sinner ever obtains; and the reasonableness and importance of using means with such by constant public and private instruction, &c. and of their earnestly attending on all proper means of instruction; and consequently the motive and encouragement there is to this. Moreover,

3dly, **FACT** and experience serve to strengthen the foregoing observations and reasoning, and shew the advantage there is in attending on the means of grace, and hold forth the proper encouragement thereto. For it appears from experience that this is the most, the only likely way to obtain regenerating grace and salvation. None, I suppose, will dispute whether more have been converted and saved of those who have attended on the means of grace, than of those who have not, in proportion to their numbers. All will grant that many were saved who attended on the preaching of John the Baptist, Christ, and his apostles; many more, according to the number of those who attended, than of those who did not enjoy or attend these means. Our Saviour indeed says that publicans and harlots went into the kingdom of God before, or rather than the chief priests and elders of the Jews. But this is so far from being an objection against what has been just observed, that it serves to confirm it. For publicans and harlots attended much more on Christ's preaching, and much better understood

derstood the things relating to the kingdom of God than they. The former attended so constantly, and were so much in his company, that it was made an objection against him, and he was obliged often to vindicate his conduct with respect to them.

It therefore appears from fact and experience that they are in the most likely way to be saved, who attend on the means of grace. And when the matter is attended to, the reason of this may easily be seen, as has been shewn above. We therefore now see what advantage there is in attendance on means, and what is the proper motive and encouragement thereto. When any one attends to his eternal interest, and feels the infinite importance of it to him, and at the same time sees the undone, wretched state he is in as a sinner, he will with all his might pursue that method which appears most likely to obtain deliverance from the evil he fears, and promote this interest. Let the only way be pointed out to him in which he may have hope, and he will want no farther motive and encouragement to attend to it with resolution and earnestness. This will prove, in all such cases, a sufficient motive and encouragement, and will never fail effectually to influence the person who is sensible his *all* lies at stake, and enters into the infinite importance of the matter to him. If therefore any sit still in the neglect of the means of grace, it is not owing to any deficiency in the encouragement to attend upon them; but to stupidity with regard to their own case, and their eternal interest. And if this encouragement is not effectual, no imaginable, or even possible, encouragement would be so.

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If any should say, that promises to the sinner's endeavours and persevering attendance on means, would raise the encouragement much higher : for then there would be no discouragement, but an absolute certainty of succeeding in this way ; the following particulars may perhaps serve to discover their mistake.

I. If there were such promises made, the sinner would be so far from being absolutely certain of salvation in a way of attendance on means, that the probability, in his view, and his encouragement would not be at all increased hereby. And that for two reasons.

1. The sinner could never come to any certainty that he had fulfilled the condition to which the promise is made, or that he is in a likely way to fulfil it. 1. Because he could never be certain that he had come up to that *precise* degree of earnest striving and diligent attendance on means, to which the promise is made. (b) If there are any promises made to the doings of the unregenerate, they are made not to any *certain kind* of exercises and endeavours, so that the lowest degree of this kind of seeking intitles to the promise, but to a *certain degree* of this kind, which is not, neither can be precisely pointed out, and distinguished from some lower degree, to which the promise is not made, so that the sinner can ever be certain that he has attained

(b) Indeed he may be certain, as long as he lives, that he has not yet fulfilled the condition ; because he has not attained to perseverance, so long as he has one breath more to draw, however great the degree of his endeavours now are. The sinner therefore can have no encouragement from such a promise of being delivered from the miserable state of unregeneracy, and becoming a true christian, in this life, as has been before observed. And this is the same with no encouragement at all.

to that degree. And however near he comes to it, if he, after all, finally falls short in the least degree, he is as far from salvation, in this way, as if he had done nothing. This therefore would tend to perplex, rather than incourage the sinner. Yea, the sinner who has the clearest view of the viciousness of his own heart, and the greatest sense of the reallity and importance of eternal things, will be farthest from imagining that he has attained to that degree of earnestness of endeavour to which the promise is made: and will be most ready to conclude against himself, as being a stupid, indolent, sottish wretch, and despair of ever obtaining salvation in this way. But,

2dly. If the sinner could be certain that he has attained to that degree of earnestness of endeavour which will intitle him to the promise, if he *perseveres* in it: yet he can have no certainty of persevering, so no certainty of salvation. As his perseverance depends wholly on himself, his own will and resolution, and so he has nothing to rely upon but himself for it, 'tis the most uncertain thing in the world that he shall persevere. He can have confidence in nothing, in this case, but his own deceitful heart which is indeed only the confidence and presumption of a *fool*: for "he that trusteth in his own heart is a fool." (i) If he is sufficiently in earnest and painful in his endeavours for some time; yet if after all that, he is in any degree remiss and negligent one day, or but one hour, all is lost, and he has got all to begin again; for he has failed of perseverance. And

(i) Prov. xxviii. 26.

how does he know that it is not now eternally too late ! So that his salvation, on this footing, is the most uncertain, precarious thing in the world : or rather may most reasonably be despaired of. He who knows his own heart, so far as he who is under proper, genuine convictions does, can take no encouragement from this quarter. This is suited only to flatter and bolster up the unreasonably self confident and fool-hardy. Therefore,

2. Such promises, were there any, would only tend to encourage men in a self confidence, which is as opposite to the whole tenor of divine revelation, and the peculiar genius and glory of the gospel, as darkness is to light ; so that the more the sinner has of it, the farther he is from Christ, and the more blind to the way of salvation by him. The preaching up such promises therefore, will tend to fix persons in their self confidence and delusion, who have no good degree of genuine conviction of their sinful, miserable state, and to fasten them down in ease and security ; so to pervert the benefit of the means of grace and frustrate the great end and design of them, which is to give light and instruction to the sinner. But to those who are in any measure convinced of their true state ; so know how little dependence there is on themselves, how vile and sottish their hearts are, this doctrine will give no encouragement : but will have directly the contrary influence on them, if they can be made to believe it, as has been before shewn.

QUEST. III. WHAT obligations are men under to use means ?

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Ans.

Ans. **THEY** seem to be under the same obligations to this, as they are to repent and believe the gospel. If God commands all men every where to repent, then he requires of them all that is implied in, or is necessary in order to, repentance. He therefore requires of them to understand those truths which are necessary to be known in order to repentance; consequently requires all that attention to the things contained in divine revelation, which is necessary in order to understand those truths, a right speculative knowledge of which is implied in repentance. But this implies a diligent use of the means of grace, as has been shewn. A neglect of any of those things, which are implied in, or necessary in order to repentance, is a neglect of, and opposition to, the command to repent; so a counteracting and violating our obligations to repent. But he is guilty of this, who neglects the means of grace. It has been shewn that there is a certain degree of speculative knowledge necessary in order to exercise repentance, which they never have who live in the neglect of all means of grace. Therefore the command to repent, is a command to attend all those means necessary in order to attain that knowledge. If men are under any obligation to attend to the command to repent and be converted, or to obey this command, they are under obligation to all that, which is implied in this, or necessary on their parts in order to it: therefore are under obligation to hear and attend to the truths contained in God's word, with the utmost concern and diligence.

The preaching the gospel therefore, which is the same with a testifying to all men repentance toward

toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ; is a call unto all to hearken and attend, as this is implied in repentance and faith. But to hearken and attend, implies the whole that is intended by the use of means. Therefore if any preacher of the gospel doubts whether he has any warrant to call upon and exhort sinners to attend the means of grace; he appears not well to understand what he is about: for he is really doing this, while he is calling upon and exhorting them to repent and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. For how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard?(k)

And it may be here observed, that this is the scriptural way of calling upon men to attend means, viz. to call on them to repent and believe the gospel. And they who so far attend to this call as to feel the infinite importance to themselves that they should comply with it, will of course, and of their own accord go into a diligent use of means. Many public teachers therefore seem to make a great mistake here. Instead of calling upon all to repent and believe the gospel, as the only condition of God's favor and eternal life, the most they do, with relation to unregenerate sinners, is to exhort and urge them to these doings which are short of

(k) THEY are indeed already attending on means, while he is preaching the gospel to them. This is supposed; for if they give no attention to what he says, why does he speak? Every word he says, is, in effect, a call to attend. And his manifesting his intention to preach in any future time, is a call upon them to attend. For if their attending is not reasonable and important, there is no reason in his preaching; so his intention to do it is foolish and absurd: consequently his doing it now is so. In this view then he who undertakes to preach the gospel; and yet holds that sinners are not to be called upon to attend means, is guilty of a glaring absurdity.

repentance. They teach them to use means in such a manner, as rather tends to defeat the proper end of means, and so as that they become a means of blinding their eyes, rather than of instruction; it tends to lead them to rest in means, and make a Saviour of them; to quiet and heal them short of repentance, and a saving application to Jesus Christ.

Obj. Whatever obligations sinners are under to attend the means of grace: yet if they attend, they still sin in all they do, while they continue impenitent, yea they are constantly growing worse and more guilty, the more pains they take, and as light and conviction increase. What obligations do they then fulfil? And is not this sufficient matter of discouragement?

Ans. I. They do not properly fulfil their obligations, if they stop short of true repentance, or real holiness; for nothing short of this is true obedience to God's law. Nevertheless, a neglect of the means is an instance of the violation of the obligation they are under, which they are not guilty of who do attend with concern and engagedness, however guilty and vile they may be in other respects; which guilt and vileness may be greatly aggravated by their attendance on means. If a man forbear to kill his neighbour, certainly he does not violate the obligations he is under not to kill, as he does who takes away his neighbour's life, however far he may be from any true love to his neighbour, or obedience to any of God's commands; and though he may, on the whole, be more guilty than the murderer.

If a father calls after, and commands his two sons, who are running from him, with a design to quit his family and government, as what they perfectly hate, immediately to return back, and submit themselves to his authority : If they ought to obey their father's command, then they are under obligation to stop and attend to what he has to say ; for this is implied in what he requires, and necessary in order to it. Therefore if one turn about and attend to what his father has to say to him, while the other stops his ears, and runs on till he is out of hearing, the former does not violate the obligation to stop and hearken, which the latter does, though if he continues to hate his father, and refuses to return and submit to his government, he cannot be said to obey his father's command ; and may, by the light and conviction laid before him by his father, in consequence of his stopping and attending, be more guilty in refusing to submit *to him than* the other who has been out of hearing.

And if any by-stander, who sees them running off, should tell them to stop and hear what their father says, he would herein act a friendly part both to them and their father, and perfectly coincide with his command to them to return and submit themselves to him. Indeed, if he should inculcate this upon them so as to leave their father's command to return, &c. out of view, dwelling on this as if it was the only thing that they had to do : or as what would on the whole recommend them to their father, and interest them in his favour ; or render them less displeasing to him, tho', after all, they persisted in their refusal to return
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and submit to him. I say, if he should treat the matter so, it would be so far from vindicating the father's authority, and coinciding with his command, that he might justly look upon it as taking part with his rebellious sons, setting up against him, and flattering them to their own ruin.

Ans. II. However sinful and abominable in God's sight the impenitent are in all they do, even in attendance on the means of grace, their sinfulness does not consist merely in this; it does not consist in their concern about their eternal interest: in their dread of misery, and desire to escape it, and obtain happiness, nor in their using means in order to this, in reading, hearing praying, &c. but in their impenitency, in the opposition of their hearts to holiness, and the only way of salvation; and in those things which are the attendants and consequence of this, or in the want of their opposites, with which all their exercises are attended, and therefore very criminal. But this can be no reason why they should neglect the proper means of salvation. If "the plowing of the wicked is sin," shall they therefore not plow? Shall they not desire food for themselves and their families, and take the most likely method to obtain it?—Their sin does not consist merely in their plowing, so that it would be a less sin not to plow, than to do it; but in the wrong views and exercises of mind with which they plow, and in the want of right ones.

And if by attending, praying, reading, hearing, &c. the impenitent sinner grows more criminal and vile, as his light and conviction increases this is not properly owing to use of means; but

to the rooted viciousness of the heart. The attendance on means is indeed the occasion of it, as by this, greater light and conviction takes place in the mind: and the wickedness of the heart takes occasion by this light to exert itself with a higher hand, and more obstinately.

Ans. III. The sinner's growing no better, but really worse, more guilty and vile, the more light he has and the greater advantages he enjoys, while he continues impenitent, is really no matter of discouragement from attending means in order to get light and instruction, &c. For in the gospel there is no more encouragement given to a less sinner than to a greater, that he shall find mercy rather than the other, while both continue impenitent, and opposers of the way of salvation therein revealed. No one sinner has any reason to hope that he shall be saved rather than an other, because he has not been, or is not now, so great a sinner as others, while he is impenitent, and at heart an enemy to the gospel. Never did a sinner find acceptance with God, on account of the comparative smallness of his sins, or his reformatations, which were short of an hearty compliance with the gospel. We indeed read of one who took his encouragement that God would accept and favor him, from his imagining himself not so criminal and vile as others. But what was the consequence? He was rejected: While one who took his encouragement to hope for God's mercy quite from another quarter, and which was consistent with his viewing himself as the chief of sinners, found favor. (*k*)

(*k*) See Luke xviii. 9, - 14.

The gospel offers salvation to the greatest sinners ; they are as welcome as any other ; they are as acceptable to God, and he is as ready to bestow salvation upon them, as if their sins were not so many and great, if they will heartily embrace offered mercy, submit to, and trust in a Mediator. In this respect there is as much encouragement to the most guilty and vile, as to any whatsoever.

And as to obtaining a new heart by regenerating grace, they who are the chief of sinners, have as much encouragement to hope for this, in the use of means, as they whose sins are less aggravated, and not so many or great. It does not appear from scripture, that God chooses out the least sinners to be the objects of this mercy ; or that he withhold it from any merely because they are so guilty and hateful in his sight : or that he waits till men who have been great sinners are so reformed as to become, all things considered, less vile and guilty. And there is not any thing in the bible that should lead us to think, that God bestows his regenerating grace on the least sinners more commonly than on those who are greater : But we find much there to teach us, that if he ever does this, it is not *because* they are less sinners than others ; but for some other reason.

If sinners were to take their only encouragement to hope for salvation in the use of means, from their being less sinners than others, or not so bad as they once were, this would tend to take all encouragement from those who are under genuine convictions, and have any true view of their own sinfulness, and leave them in absolute despair. For all such, as they have a more clear and full sight
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of their own sins than they can have of others, are naturally led to view themselves as the greatest sinners. And as by attendance on means, they get more and more acquainted with their own hearts, their own sinfulness increases in their view, they are so far from looking on themselves as less sinners than they were, that they naturally view themselves in a contrary light.

The only proper way therefore to encourage the sinner, who is under any great degree of genuine conviction of sin, and concern about his eternal interest, to attend on means with hope, is not to preach up promises to his doings, and lead him to expect hereby to become less sinful; but to teach him the true end and design of means. He will then know that the great wickedness of his heart, exercised in all he does, and his appearing to himself to grow worse rather than better, which is commonly the chief ground of discouragement to such, is really no reason why he should neglect means; but rather an encouragement constantly to attend. For this sight and conviction of his own sinfulness, which is necessary in order to salvation, is kept up in his mind and encreased, only by attending on means. In this view his own experience serves to shew the advantage of using means, and is matter of encouragement and hope.

F I N I S.

E R R A T A.

Page 18, line 13, for *as* read *are*. P. 67, l. 1, *r. exemplified*. P. 107, l. 3 in the margin, for *their*, *r. this*.



